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Sustainable development: disaster risk reduction

Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the two years since the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was agreed by Member States, much progress has been made in reducing disaster risk. Numerous countries have aligned their national strategies with the Sendai Framework, early warning systems have been strengthened, disaster risk management legislation has been enacted and public education and training has intensified.

At the same time, the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, hosted by Mexico in 2017 in Cancun, highlighted the enormous challenges that remain. The economic costs of disasters continue to escalate, in some places faster than gross domestic product, as a consequence of poorly risk-informed economic planning and investment. Climate change is increasing and represents a fundamental threat to efforts to reduce disaster risk. It is exacerbating existing natural hazards, with cascading impacts on livelihoods, food security, displacement and even conflict.

The present report provides an overview of progress on the implementation of the Sendai Framework, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/226. In accordance with Assembly resolution 71/227, the report also includes a section on effective global response to address the impacts of the El Niño phenomenon.

Integrating disaster risk management, including climate risk, in sustainable development planning and budgets at the national and subnational levels will require strong national coordination mechanisms that meaningfully engage all relevant institutions and stakeholders, as well as coherent support from the United Nations system. This coordination and engagement will be essential if Member States are to achieve the Sendai Framework global target that has the earliest deadline, namely to have national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in place by 2020.

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I. State of disaster risk

1. Two years after their adoption, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are producing tangible results through efforts taken across all levels and sectors. As Member States and stakeholders call for a more ambitious and accelerated pace of implementation, a coherent and integrated approach between the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda, as well as the Paris Agreement on climate change, is vital to ensure that public and private investments in development are resilient to natural and human-made hazards.

2. Throughout the reporting period, severe weather affected progress towards sustainable development worldwide. For example, in May 2017, Tropical Cyclone Donna caused significant damage to houses, services, infrastructure and crops, particularly in Vanuatu. In South America, heavy rains powered by El Niño conditions in March 2017 brought 10 times more rainfall than normal. More than 1.1 million people were affected by flooding and landslides in Peru alone,[1] which damaged homes, critical infrastructure and agriculture. In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew took 585 lives[2] and left a trail of economic losses amounting to $15 billion, with only $5 billion of the losses insured.[3] Haiti bore the brunt of the hurricane, with more than 1.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and an estimated 175,000 displaced.[4] While climate change is increasing the intensity, frequency and variability of extreme weather conditions and exacerbating slow-onset disasters such as drought, the continuing threat of geophysical hazards highlights the importance of a multi-hazard approach to disaster risk reduction.

3. It is estimated that by 2050, the urban population exposed to cyclones will increase from 310 million to 680 million, while exposure to major earthquake risk will increase from 370 million to 870 million people.[5] Exposure of urban assets to sea level rise and flooding could reach $35 trillion by 2070,[5] which is 10 times more than the current levels. Economic losses from earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones and flooding alone are now reaching an average of $300 billion a year,[6] with heavy impacts on key sectors such as infrastructure, energy, agriculture, environment, water, health and education.

4. A risk-informed approach to sustainable development and climate change adaptation has never been more important. In some countries, lessons from the past have deterred investments in infrastructure and social services in hazard-prone areas to an extent; however, the impact of disasters continues to be disproportionately felt in low- and low-middle income countries. Expressed as a proportion of social expenditure, expected annual losses in low-income countries are five times higher than in high-income countries.[6] Increasing population density, widespread poverty and poorly planned development — from erecting hospitals on flood plains to building schools on unstable hillsides — exposes more people, economic assets and

[1] See http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/-PE-Flash_Appeal_ENG_1000_hrs_%28PUBLIC%29-20170410-CV-20519.pdf.

[2] See www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL142016_Matthew.pdf.

[3] See http://thoughtleadership.aonbenfield.com/Documents/20170117-ab-if-annual-climate-catastrophe-report.pdf.

[4] See http://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/haiti-hurricane-matthew-situation-report-no-25-25-november-2016.

[5] R. J. Nicholls and others, "Ranking port cities with high exposure and vulnerability to climate extremes: exposure estimates", OECD *Environment Working Papers*, No. 1 (Paris, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Publishing, 2008).

[6] *Making Development Sustainable: the Future of Disaster Risk Management, Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015* (Geneva, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

infrastructure to the risk of disasters every day. Women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, especially in the poorest communities, are often most at risk.

5. Disaster risk reduction is the essence of prevention. With better understanding of disaster risk, strengthened disaster risk governance, resilient investments choices, effective preparedness plans and building back better — essentially the four priorities for action of the Sendai Framework — countries can more effectively reduce risk and prevent loss of life, economic losses and damage to critical infrastructure and ecosystems. Yet, despite the value for money of preventative measures, investments in resilience continue to fall short and countries continue to face costly response and recovery efforts in addition to the lost lives, livelihoods and displacement. In all countries, eradicating extreme poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires that disaster risk reduction be integrated in core social, economic and development planning.

II. Strengthened coherence, guidance and innovation in support of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

A. Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

6. The fifth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Cancun, Mexico, from 24 to 26 May 2017, was chaired by Enrique Peña Nieto, the President of Mexico. The United Nations Secretary-General was represented by the Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed. The 2017 Global Platform was the largest to date, with more than 7,000 registered participants, including Heads of State and Government, ministers, mayors and parliamentarians, and representatives of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, local governments, local communities, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, women's groups, children and youth, persons with disabilities, science, academia and the private sector. The first to take place after the adoption of the Sendai Framework, the Global Platform 2017 was an opportunity to assess progress over the past two years. It provided an array of opportunities to accelerate implementation of the Sendai Framework, build partnerships and augment domestic and international efforts to reduce disaster risk.

7. Confirming the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach for the effective implementation of the Sendai Framework, participants shared lessons and good practice, highlighted the latest technologies and approaches and forged partnerships that strengthen cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation, as well innovative partnerships between non-governmental organizations and the public and private sectors. Throughout the Global Platform, there was a strong overarching commitment to address disaster risk reduction as a core element of crisis prevention.

8. It was reaffirmed that disaster risk reduction is critical for achieving the 2030 Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals. There was also important convergence around the need to address climate risk coherently with disaster risk more broadly and in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and the need for the delivery of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation to be mainstreamed across all sectors. The Global Platform was seen as a fundamental mechanism to foster practical coherence and integration across the implementation of these and other international agendas and to monitor progress.

9. The outcomes of the Global Platform were captured in the Cancun High-level Communiqué and the Chair's summary. The High-level Communiqué outlines commitments made at the Leader's Forum to apply disaster risk management in overall economic planning as a lynchpin for sustainable development, resilient infrastructure and job creation. Among other things, participants committed to conduct a disaster risk assessment of existing critical infrastructure by 2019 and to strengthen the enforcement of regulatory frameworks and building codes. In the light of the tens of trillions of dollars that will be invested in infrastructure in the next decades, it was recommended that a coalition of countries for critical infrastructure be established in order to share knowledge, tools and best practices and to build the capacity of engineers and architects and enhance their understanding and application of risk and mitigation measures.

10. The Chair's summary consolidates the main action points to propel the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the next few years. Intensive efforts are required to ensure that countries can achieve Sendai Framework global target (e) to have national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in place by 2020. This includes building the capacity to collect, analyse and widely disseminate disaster loss data that can provide statistical evidence for use by policymakers, development planners and investors. Standardized methodologies and guidelines for data collection, geospatial and other technological advancements that can anticipate emerging risk, and ongoing work by local authorities and stakeholders to collect disaggregated data at the community and household levels should be mobilized to support this effort.

11. The capacity to promote, establish and manage effective and broad-based partnerships emerged as an important aspect of disaster risk governance that needs to be strengthened. Managing disaster risk is a cross-cutting endeavour that requires inclusive and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms. Concerted efforts are required to adopt specific norms and regulations that enable partnership within and between public and private sectors and ensure participation of stakeholders in disaster risk governance and planning mechanisms. Enhancing women's capacity-building and leadership in the public and private sectors to reduce the gender gap in disaster risk management and decision-making and to ensure gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction strategies was identified as a top priority.

12. The Global Platform also resulted in commitments by stakeholder groups to intensify momentum in implementing the Sendai Framework. These include the Declaration of Local and Regional Governments on the implementation of the Sendai Framework, as well as the Business for Resilience Manifesto of Private Sector Organizations, presented by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies (ARISE). There was also recognition of the importance of the Dhaka Declaration on Disability and Disaster Risk Management. Countries were urged to implement the Declaration and report progress on its implementation through the Sendai Framework monitoring. Participants also called for the effective operationalization of the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework.

13. The Chair conveyed the recommendations contained in the Global Platform to the President of the Economic and Social Council to ensure a risk-informed approach during the deliberations on eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity as well as the Sustainable Development Goals reviewed at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017. The Global Platform was also instrumental in setting the agenda for the regional platforms in 2018, to be hosted by Colombia, Italy, Mongolia and Tunisia, as well as the next Global Platform, to be hosted by Switzerland in 2019. This robust multi-stakeholder process to track progress, guide implementation and promote innovation at the regional and global

levels will provide rich inputs on disaster risk reduction and its contribution to sustainable development when the high-level political forum convenes under the auspices of the General Assembly in 2019.

B. Strengthening action at the regional level to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

14. Galvanized by the regional and subregional platforms for disaster risk reduction, regional intergovernmental organizations, with the support of partners, are working to maximize the benefits of regional cooperation to achieve the Sendai Framework global targets and the associated Sustainable Development Goals. Strategies, workplans and tools have been developed that provide region-specific analysis, policy guidance, tools and capacity-building to support national and local efforts and collectively address transboundary risks. They also guide government ministries and stakeholders from across sectors to execute a coherent and multi-stakeholder approach to disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and climate change adaptation and contribute to the aggregation of regional-level information for monitoring and reporting across sectors.

Africa

15. A comprehensive and coordinated structure has been progressively established from the regional to the subregional and national levels to facilitate the implementation of the Sendai Framework across Africa. Spurred by the regional plan of the African Union Commission for the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Africa was adopted at the sixth session of Africa Regional Platform and the fifth High-level Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction, hosted by Mauritius in Port Louis from 22 to 25 November 2016.

16. The Programme of Action provides strategic direction to integrate disaster risk reduction into regional and national sustainable development and climate change adaptation strategies and to mobilize domestic resources to increase the allocation for disaster risk reduction in national budgets. It is accompanied by a five-year action plan to accelerate the implementation of the Sendai Framework global targets, which provides Governments and stakeholders with guidance to develop comprehensive national disaster risk reduction programmes plan based on national and regional priorities and covering the risk of small- and large-scale hazards.

17. The Regional Platform was complemented by subregional platforms and meetings convened by subregional organizations in East, West, Central and Southern Africa. Each gathering resulted in outcomes such as subregional action plans and workplans, joint strategies for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and, in the case of the Economic Community of Central African States, the establishment of a dedicated subregional disaster risk reduction unit.

Americas

18. The fifth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas was hosted by Canada in Montreal from 7 to 9 March 2017. Member States agreed on the Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Americas. Grounded in a whole-of-society approach, the multi-stakeholder plan of action supports countries to build community resilience and reduce disaster risk and impacts. It offers a suite of

practical and actionable regional initiatives to which countries can collectively contribute towards the four Sendai Framework priorities for action.

19. At the subregional level, the Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy for the Caribbean, the Central American Policy on Comprehensive Risk Management and the Union of South American Nations initiated processes to align their regional frameworks with the priorities and global targets of the Sendai Framework. In the Caribbean, the harmonization of the monitoring framework of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy with the reporting mechanisms for the Sendai Framework global targets and Sustainable Development Goals indicators is a significant step to promote coherence between disaster risk reduction and sustainable development in the subregion.

Arab region

20. Measures have been taken to develop a regional disaster risk reduction strategy tailored to the specific context and disaster risks in the Arab region. At the third Arab Preparatory Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, hosted by Qatar in Doha from 30 April to 1 May 2017, countries reviewed progress made, discussed common regional disaster risk reduction challenges and shared lessons and best practices in order to update the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. The review process aligned the Strategy to the Sendai Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Arab Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change initiatives.

21. The conference culminated in the adoption of the Doha Declaration of the Fifth Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction. To advance implementation, the Declaration calls for the development of specific Arab regional tools, methodologies and guidance for risk assessments that benefit from international and regional best practices for disaster risk reduction and take into account the specificities and needs of the region. It also calls for a strengthened role for science and technology for disaster risk reduction in the Arab region, including by nominating a scientific body from each country to be represented in the Arab Science and Technology Advisory Group and accelerating the development of national and regional multi-hazard early warning systems.

Asia and the Pacific

22. Regional and subregional strategies have been finalized across Asia and the Pacific towards a coherent approach to disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and climate change adaptation. These strategies also guide Member States in adopting cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder partnerships. The Asia Regional Plan for Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction was adopted at the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, hosted by India in New Delhi from 2 to 5 November 2016. The Plan comprises disaster risk reduction policy guidance at the national level that includes milestones to guide countries in the pursuit of the seven global targets of the Sendai Framework and a two-year action plan aligned with the four priorities for action set out in the Sendai Framework. Furthermore, the regional road Map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, adopted by the member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) at the fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, held in March 2017, identifies disaster risk reduction as a priority area. Subsequently, in May, ESCAP adopted resolution 73/7 on enhancing regional cooperation for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Asia and the Pacific.

23. Tajikistan hosted the first meeting of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia and the South Caucasus in Dushanbe from 12 to 14 July 2016. Ministers and stakeholders from a range of sectors came together to adopt the Dushanbe Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience-Building as well as the Plan of Action for Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Central Asia and South Caucasus Region. As the only multi-stakeholder platform in the region, it will serve as the main forum for dialogue, review, monitoring and capacity-building on the Sendai Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals and climate change adaptation.

24. At the forty-seventh Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting, held in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, from 8 to 10 September 2016, member States endorsed the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific: An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (2017-2030) as an innovative integrated framework for disaster risk reduction, climate change and sustainable development. It provides guidance for the coherent implementation of the Sendai Framework, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities for Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda in order to enhance resilience by embedding risk-reduction into social and economic development planning processes. At the annual Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management, held in Suva from 24 to 26 October 2016, countries considered ways to facilitate implementation of the Framework for Resilient Development. The outcome statement recommends that countries and territories and partners take the necessary steps to improve disaggregated data collection and analysis of risk factors; explore the development of a Pacific advisory group on science and technology; further develop a multi-hazard early warning system in the region; and document and apply traditional and local disaster risk reduction knowledge systems.

Europe

25. The European Union is taking steps to further incorporate disaster risk in its core work. The European Commission adopted an action plan entitled "A disaster risk-informed approach to all European Union policies", and the European Committee of the Regions issued a joint action plan on implementation of the Sendai Framework at the local and regional levels. To guide and support implementation, the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted a Sendai Framework road map for 2016 to 2020 at its seventh Annual Meeting, held in Helsinki from 6 to 8 October 2016. The road map identifies national and local strategies, risk assessments and disaster loss databases as essential building blocks for implementing the Sendai Framework and integrating disaster risk reduction across sectors at national and local levels, including climate change, the environment, private sector and health. The road map is supported by a four-year workplan adopted at the Council of Europe ministerial session held in Portugal in October 2016.

26. The European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction hosted its first multi-stakeholder Open Forum from 26 to 28 March 2017 in Istanbul, Turkey. The ensuing High-level Dialogue Communiqué helps to unify the efforts of stakeholders through inclusive and well-coordinated national and local strategies for disaster risk reduction. It also promotes integrating sustainable finance with the disaster risk reduction and climate agendas; raising awareness and the dissemination of risk knowledge through parliamentarians and local communities; and strengthening partnerships on disaster risk reduction to foster economic growth and job creation.

C. Coherence across internationally agreed agendas and frameworks

27. In the interests of efficiency and to maximize impact, it is essential that the various intergovernmental agendas and frameworks that contribute to the 2030 Agenda be implemented coherently. To that end, at its forty-eighth session, the Statistical Commission endorsed the use of indicators developed and agreed by Member States to monitor progress in achieving the Sendai Framework global targets to also monitor implementation of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (Goals 1, 11 and 13) (see E/2017/24/E/CN.3/2017/35, chap.I.A, annex to the resolution). The shared indicators respond to the underlying principles of the 2030 Agenda to enhance coherence and simplicity and reduce the reporting burden for countries. Shared indicators can promote coherence through streamlined reporting against both agreements and the use of common multi-purpose datasets and can contribute to the identification of areas of mutual reinforcement where disaster risk reduction and sustainable development intersect.

28. The open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction, which developed the indicators to monitor the implementation of the Sendai Framework, also endorsed updated terminology related to disaster risk reduction contained in the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the working group (A/71/644 and Corr.1). The agreed terminology can facilitate the implementation of the Sendai Framework and foster cooperation across and within nations, sectors and stakeholder groups. The agreement on terminology also helps countries and organizations to build shared understanding and foster coherent policy across the disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and climate change agendas.

29. In 2017, parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change continued to consider various approaches to measure progress in achieving the Paris Agreement adaptation goal. Aligning this work with that of the indicators for the Sendai Framework global targets and the Sustainable Development Goals will enable national and local governments to draw on similar data sets and identify areas of convergence. National disaster loss data sets are important foundations in climate change planning and are useful in tracking progress with respect to the adaptation goal.

30. The Global Platform demonstrated the growing political commitment to disaster risk reduction as an approach that can encourage coherence within and across sectors. Examples emerged of countries where national and local strategies for disaster risk reduction are being linked to domestic sustainable development processes and to nationally determined contributions towards the Paris Agreement. In particular, small island developing States were highlighted as leaders in pursuing coherence through incorporating disaster risk reduction and climate change considerations into sustainable development. Discussions at the Global Platform also underscored that further work was needed in many countries to strengthen institutional capacity on coherence, dismantle silos and clarify roles and responsibilities.

31. The benefits and failures of coherent approaches are felt most acutely at the local level. Coherence at the international and regional levels must be accompanied by efforts to strengthen capacities to plan, implement and report at the local level. Partnerships between local communities, local businesses and local governments are essential to promote risk-informed development that is rooted in local priorities and to strengthen the coping capacity of local communities, in line with the principles of the Sendai Framework.

D. Coordination of disaster risk reduction across the United Nations system

32. In General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, Member States requested the United Nations development system to enhance coherence, coordination and efficiency at all levels in order to ensure a coherent approach to the interconnections and cross-cutting elements across the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience: "Towards a risk-informed and integrated approach to sustainable development" is a significant response to this request and to the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

33. Through the Plan of Action, the United Nations system is committed to strengthening system-wide coherence in support of the Sendai Framework and other agreements that reinforce the 2030 Agenda through a risk-informed approach. United Nations entities have agreed to build their capacity to deliver coordinated high-quality disaster risk reduction support to countries and to maintain disaster risk reduction as a strategic priority. The following is an illustration of activities and initiatives undertaken across the United Nations system to deliver on these commitments.

34. To strengthen system-wide coherence in implementing the Sendai Framework, the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative expanded support to United Nations country teams, Governments and national stakeholders in four new countries in Africa, namely Benin, Guinea, Namibia and Zimbabwe, to develop nationally tailored disaster risk reduction action plans in line with the Sendai Framework. Moreover Georgia released a national disaster risk reduction strategy and the Serbia validated a national implementation plan for disaster risk management, both developed with coordinated technical assistance from the Initiative.

35. The Global Partnership Using Space Technology Applications for Disaster Risk Reduction, comprising seven United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, space agencies, government ministries and academia, agreed on terms of reference and a multi-year work plan. The Partnership will facilitate a coordinated approach for Earth observations, space-based applications, geographic information systems and remote sensing in support of the Sendai Framework.

36. The Global Preparedness Partnership, which will help countries to preserve their development gains from the impacts of natural hazards and climate change by enhancing their preparedness for recovery after disasters, including to "build back better", was launched operationally at the Global Platform in Cancun and opened for country applications in June. The initial phase, which will cover 15 countries over a period of two to three years, will provide up to $130 million.

37. The World Health Organization, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health, has advanced a collaborative approach to the International Health Regulations as a key contribution to the Sendai Framework. Between March 2016 and April 2017, 37 countries completed joint external evaluations that provide countries with valuable inputs to develop national action plans for health security and build capacity to prevent, detect, prepare and respond to events, in particular disease outbreaks and chemical and radiological incidents.

38. The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, a global partnership housed at the World Bank which provides seed money and capacity support to mainstream disaster risk management into national development plans, added more

than 90 grants to its portfolio. Projects provide support to countries with respect to the adoption of policies, plans and investment strategies that minimize disaster risk and build resilience. As an important step towards greater alignment with the Sendai Framework, the Facility's new strategic plan for 2018 to 2020 includes ambitious targets that support achievement of the priorities for action and global targets set out in the Sendai Framework, and also deepens coherence with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

39. The implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action in Asia and the Pacific is guided by the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience. Co-Chaired by ESCAP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Working Group organized technical sessions and developed guidance documents for Member States on coordination across disaster risk reduction, climate change and sustainable development and facilitated a coordinated response to more effectively support the implementation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations-United Nations Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management 2016-2020. Similarly, disaster risk reduction has been integrated into the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism in Africa, resulting in the formation of a cluster on humanitarian matters and disaster risk management.

40. Towards building the capacity of the United Nations system to deliver coordinated support to countries on disaster risk reduction, the United Nations System Staff College, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction established a partnership to design and develop an online course on disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. The course targets United Nations staff, national disaster risk reduction focal points and development practitioners to enhance understanding on integrated approaches between the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda.

41. At least 20 United Nations entities currently include disaster risk reduction and resilience as a priority area in their strategic plans. During the reporting period, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) have incorporated disaster risk reduction in their strategic plans for 2018 to 2021, thereby reaffirming long-term commitments to adopt a risk-informed approach. Furthermore, in preparation for UNISPACE+50 in June 2018, the Office for Outer Space Affairs has included the use of space-based technologies and information for the Sendai Framework as a thematic priority. FAO has integrated disaster risk reduction in its new strategy on climate change adaptation and mitigation to increase the resilience of agricultural livelihoods.

42. To ensure coherence between the various inter-agency initiatives and to provide strategic guidance to the United Nations system on the implementation of the Plan of Action, the Senior Leadership Group for Disaster Risk Reduction has been established. Convened by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Senior Leadership Group comprises senior leaders from the United Nations and related organizations. An early stocktaking has been initiated to help reduce duplication, identify gaps in the disaster risk reduction support provided by the United Nations system and promote a more effective use of resources. A results-based monitoring system for the Plan of Action has been also established and a study of common system-wide baselines has been launched. Guided by the results-based monitoring system, the Senior Leadership Group will review progress on the Plan of Action, while also promoting system-wide ownership

and accountability at the headquarters and country levels and ensuring linkages and coherence with the 2030 Agenda.

43. In addition, in April, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination advanced the United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action. The document aims for improved United Nations system collaboration and guidance on synergies between intergovernmental agreements to ensure coherent and streamlined support, including stronger linkages between policy and operational aspects of the work of the United Nations system in support of Member States on climate resilience and disaster risk reduction.

III. Progress in implementing the Sendai Framework

Monitoring of the Sendai Framework

44. Progress in achieving the seven global targets of the Sendai Framework will be measured using the 33 indicators recommended in the report of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction (see A/71/644 and Corr.1). Monitoring at the national level will be supported by the online Sendai Framework Monitor, to be launched in early 2018. After several rounds of end-user consultations, a prototype of the Sendai Framework Monitor was piloted at the Global Platform. A set of optional national indicators has been developed that may be selected and tailored by countries to measure nationally determined targets and priorities aligned with the Sendai Framework. The first report of the Sendai Framework Monitor will be prepared for consideration at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the General Assembly in 2019.

45. With a robust monitoring framework in place it is important to survey the availability of national disaster-related data, capacity gaps and resources needed to fill them and the availability of current baselines from which to measure the global targets of the Sendai Framework. In February 2017, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction conducted a Sendai Framework data readiness review of 87 countries. Over 90 per cent of countries indicated the need for financial resources to cover data gaps, and many countries, particularly those in special situations, face significant capacity gaps and technological deficiencies which hinder their ability to track progress.

46. A comprehensive approach to data enhancement is required to address data availability, accessibility, application and quality if all countries are to effectively contribute to the first report of the Sendai Framework Monitor by 2019. The Global Partnership for Disaster-related Data for Sustainable Development was initiated by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, ESCAP, the Economic Commission for Europe and partner organizations as a multi-stakeholder initiative to assist countries in filling gaps in disaster-related data, building national capacity and improving data quality, while also mobilizing political support.

47. The Sendai Framework Monitor will serve multiple purposes for Member States, regional intergovernmental organizations and local governments. It enables progress to be tracked in implementing the Sendai Framework across sectors, as well as related dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals and climate change adaptation. It will simultaneously function as a management tool to help countries develop disaster risk reduction strategies, make risk-informed policy decisions and allocate resources to prevent new disaster risks. Together with national disaster loss databases, the Sendai Framework Monitor can contribute to the development of actionable national and local disaster risk reduction policies and

strategies by 2020 on the basis of on credible data, evidence and available capacities.

National and local disaster risk reduction strategies

48. The Sendai Framework recognizes the importance of supporting national and subnational governments while also empowering local authorities with resources and decision-making responsibilities to reduce disaster risk, as appropriate. The examples below are indicative of efforts by Member States, and the technical and capacity-building support provided by the United Nations system, to meet the deadline for achieving global target (e) of the Sendai Framework to substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.

49. Policy support and technical guidance were provided to national and local governments in 10 African countries to develop national policies for disaster risk reduction and local resilience plans, as well as disaster loss databases. Twenty-one African countries now have operational databases. This was accompanied by capacity-building measures, including training for more than 400 government staff, workshops on integrated and coherent approaches to disaster risk reduction for parliamentarians and the media and remote support for the implementation of disaster loss databases. Fourteen municipalities from six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are finalizing local disaster risk reduction action plans, supported by a coordinated approach from the United Nations system. United Nations entities conducted joint disaster risk reduction assessments, updated loss and damage databases and supported the integration of resilience considerations in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in four countries. Multi-stakeholder capacity-building meetings were held to develop national disaster risk reduction strategies and plans in three countries in the Arab region, while five other countries are in the process of updating their existing legislation and strategies. At the local level, eight governments have developed resilience action plans in line with the Sendai Framework and at least 10 governments are expected to complete their plans by the end of 2017. In the Pacific, countries and territories have made significant progress in developing integrated national disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development strategies. For example, Vanuatu prepared a 15-year National Sustainable Development Plan (2016-2030) that integrates disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation as key priorities of the national sustainable development plan.

50. On the basis of the needs identified by Member States, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction continues its capacity-building function through the Global Education and Training Institute in Incheon, Republic of Korea. During the reporting period, 1,224 national and local government officials from 46 countries have been trained, among which 40 per cent of participants were women. The training programme focused on understanding disaster risk reduction and the importance of coherent implementation of the Sendai Framework, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement towards developing integrated plans for resilience.

51. A number of United Nations entities are scaling up their technical and normative support to Member States at the national and subnational levels, in line with the Sendai Framework. For example, the International Labour Organization, FAO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF have supported countries to build capacity and formulate sector-specific action plans and strategies for a risk-informed approach. Meanwhile, UNDP and ESCAP are developing guidance tools to support countries in the implementation of the Sendai Framework and the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into sustainable development planning and budgeting processes.

UN-Women is supporting countries in addressing gaps in evidence and capacities for gender equality in disaster risk reduction and in increasing women's participation in developing gender-responsive national disaster management plans. The United Nations Population Fund has made progress in integrating sexual and reproductive health within national and local disaster risk reduction plans, including by establishing a standard for minimum initial service. To maximize impact, make more efficient use of resources and deliver mutual benefits across sectors, support provided by the United Nations system for disaster risk reduction at the national and local levels must be coordinated and coherent and be aligned with the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience as well as the requirements of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

IV. Catalysing the actions of partners and stakeholders and building partnerships

52. The Sendai Framework underscores the need for disaster risk reduction responsibilities to be shared by stakeholders, as appropriate to their national circumstances and systems of governance, and that coordination mechanisms within and across sectors at all levels include clear articulation of responsibilities between public and private stakeholders. Sustainable Development Goal 17 also recognizes that a successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. It is critical to leverage and catalyse strategic partnerships across all sectors and with all relevant stakeholders to implement the Sendai Framework effectively.

A. Stakeholder engagement

Parliamentarians and local government

53. Parliamentarians continue to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework, particularly by adopting and amending legislation and advocating for budget allocations for disaster risk reduction. To this end, disaster risk reduction featured in the Inter-Parliamentary Union Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe, held in 2016. Training workshops to strengthen disaster risk reduction capacities were held for the Parliamentarians Network for Resilience to Disasters in Central Africa and the East African Community Regional Parliamentarian Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction.

54. During the parliamentary meeting of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Global Legislators Organization held a session on disaster risk reduction. Subsequently, in the Cancun Communiqué on the Role of Legislators in Mainstreaming Biodiversity for Well-Being, the links between disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development were recognized. Moreover, at the Global Platform, members of parliaments, the Interparliamentary Union, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, women political leaders, non-governmental organizations and United Nations entities convened to share approaches to strengthen disaster risk governance, promote resilient public and private investments and to develop national and sectoral disaster risk reduction plans by 2020.

Women and girls

55. It is crucial to understand and address the gender dimensions of disaster risk. At the Global Platform, a global programme was launched in support of a gender-responsive implementation of the Sendai Framework. The programme, entitled "Addressing the gender inequality of risk and promoting community resilience to natural hazards in a changing climate", is a partnership of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, UN-Women and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

56. Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction strategies require the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data to identify the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls. The open-ended intergovernmental working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction encouraged Member States to initiate or strengthen the collection of data on disaster loss disaggregated by sex. Recording women's assets and economic contributions in disaster loss databases can ensure gender equality is a key component of "building back better" and promote recovery that equally benefits and empowers women. UN-Women is providing support to national authorities to conduct protection assessments and collect and analyse disaster risk data disaggregated by sex. Furthermore, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women drafted its general recommendation No. 35 on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate.

Children and youth

57. The Sendai Framework recognizes children and youth as agents of change and encourages that space and modalities be provided for their contributions to disaster risk reduction. In addition to playing active roles in their schools and communities, children and youth have been implementing the Sendai Framework through global activities and have advocated for coherence across the 2030 Agenda through events at global and regional intergovernmental forums, including the Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, the high-level political forum and the Youth Forum. Youth have also been active in promoting intersectional approaches to disaster risk reduction through engaging indigenous youth and youth with disabilities in global campaigns. At the Global Platform, the Youth Engagement Platform was launched as a mechanism to strengthen and consolidate the role of youth and youth-led efforts in the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

Persons with disabilities

58. Even as persons with disabilities are excessively affected by disasters, their knowledge and leadership skills are essential in building inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies. Since the adoption of the Sendai Framework as an inclusive and people-centred approach, there has been a surge in the participation of the disability community in the development and implementation of the disaster risk reduction strategies. For example, the secretariat of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities integrated the key tenets of the Sendai Framework in the guidelines to States parties on periodic reporting to the Committee. Persons with disabilities played a central role in making the Global Platform and its outcomes not only disability-inclusive, but inclusive of all, including through the innovative use of robotic telepresence that enabled the remote participation of persons with disabilities.

59. The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and disabled people's organizations in the regional platforms for disaster risk reduction is also evident through the outcome documents. In Asia, disabled people's organizations are

following up on their regional platform commitments by providing technical support to Governments; standardizing tools for collecting and using data on disability, gender and age; promoting universal design and assistive technology; including other most at-risk groups such as women, children and elderly persons in community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives; and building their own capacity in disaster risk reduction.

Indigenous peoples

60. Indigenous peoples have amplified their engagement in international efforts to reduce disaster risk. They have leveraged existing forums, such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, to raise awareness of risks faced by indigenous communities and indigenous perspectives on disaster risk and have advocated for new ways of building partnerships to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework in indigenous communities.

61. The fifth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas provided the opportunity for indigenous people to reflect on barriers and identify opportunities for further action, including the creation of regional indigenous networks to give voice to indigenous advocates for disaster risk reduction. At the Global Platform, indigenous peoples introduced practical recommendations on how to build on indigenous knowledge in implementing for the Sendai Framework and how indigenous peoples can play a more direct role as partners in promoting coherence across the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement.

Private sector

62. The Sendai Framework highlights that the lack of regulation and incentives for private sector investment in disaster risk reduction is an underlying risk driver. ARISE, a global private sector alliance co-chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, aims to coordinate and systematically engage the private sector in disaster risk reduction and mobilize support for the role of the private sector in implementing the Sendai Framework. Throughout the reporting period, ARISE projects have engaged more than 500 businesses, 15 universities, 1,500 students and a host of cities. For example, the City of New Orleans, in partnership with ARISE member AECOM, released the survey report on the disaster-readiness of more than 200 of the city's small and medium-sized business. ARISE in the Philippines issued a six-point commitment statement to prioritize risk-sensitive investment and action and ARISE member SM Prime is working with the Philippines to implement the "build back better" approach in villages affected by Typhoon Haiyan.

63. The Disaster Risk-Integrated Operational Risk model was launched in November 2016, with an initial pilot in 20 countries as a partnership between the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Economist Intelligence Unit. The model helps the business community to make disaster risk-sensitive investment decisions. Moreover, Florida International University in the United States of America, supported by Germany and the Office, collaborated with other universities and business schools to develop open-source white papers for improving existing disaster risk management courses and launched new online course modules.

B. Partnerships and advocacy

Early warning initiatives

64. Progress in improving the capacity of countries to monitor natural, technological and biological hazards and to issue early warnings that can save lives and reduce livelihood losses remains highly variable. As an integral part of efforts to implement the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement, the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems initiative has been established to support the delivery of climate services in least developed countries and small island developing States with a view to strengthening their capacity to issue early warnings and respond effectively. To date, approximately $30 million has been pledged, against an overall target of $100 million.

65. The International Network for Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems, co-chaired by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, has been established as a multi-stakeholder partnership that will facilitate the sharing of expertise and good practice for multi-hazard early warning systems. During the preparatory days of the Global Platform, a multi-hazard early warning conference resulted in a set of measures for monitoring access to early warning for countries to track progress towards Sendai Framework global target (g).

66. Furthermore, the Global Meteo Alarm System has been formulated and is being considered by a number of WMO Regional Associations, for the development of an alert system that would provide target users, including the newly established United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre, as well as humanitarian actors and the private sector, with authoritative hydro-meteorological hazard warnings and related information. FAO also developed the Early Warning-Early Action initiative to assist countries to translate forecasts and early warnings into prioritized, multisectoral early action plans for the agricultural sector.

International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction 2016

67. The "Sendai Seven Campaign — 7 Targets, 7 Years" was launched on the International Day for Disaster Reduction, on 13 October 2016. The theme in 2016 "Live to tell" focused on Sendai Framework global target (a) to substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030. Examples of events held around the world included a discussion at United Nations Headquarters on the contribution of disaster risk reduction and the effective implementation of the Sendai Framework to the 2030 Agenda and the inclusion of the theme "Live to Tell" during the Great Ethiopian Run in November 2016. The Sendai Seven strategy seeks to recognize best practice in achieving the global targets of the Sendai Framework. The campaign will continue for the next six years, with a focus on a different global target for each year.

World Tsunami Awareness Day 2016

68. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/203, 5 November 2016 marked the first annual World Tsunami Awareness Day. Events worldwide aimed to change the misconception that tsunamis are far-off disasters rather than real hazards that can wipe out progress towards sustainable development and require continuous training and up-to-date evacuation plans. Events at United Nations Headquarters during the Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in New Delhi in October, and at the sixth Africa Regional Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Mauritius in November, highlighted what has been done and

where gaps persist in building resilience and promoting early warning. These were followed by a summit for high school students in Kuroshio, Japan, on 25 and 26 November. More than 360 young people from 30 countries came together to share lessons and to issue the Kuroshio Declaration on the role of young persons in tsunami awareness.

69. In the weeks preceding World Tsunami Awareness Day, 24 countries around the Indian Ocean participated in the "Indian Ocean Wave 2016" tsunami simulations. The Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami Early Warning and Mitigation System in the North-Eastern Atlantic, the Mediterranean and Connected Seas met in Romania in September 2016 and decided to bolster their tsunami warning systems. In the Caribbean, World Tsunami Awareness Day events took place in October 2016 in Trinidad and Tobago during the twentieth Meeting of the Special Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction of the Association of Caribbean States.

Safe Hospitals Initiative

70. Safe hospitals are central to the implementation of the Sendai Framework, in particular global target (d) related to critical infrastructure and basic services. During the reporting period, a training package for the Hospital Safety Index has been finalized to promote a rapid and low-cost diagnostic tool for assessing the probability that a hospital will remain operational in emergencies and disasters. A total of 25 countries in the Americas now have a national safe hospitals programme; 23 countries have up-to-date standards for the design, construction and operation of new, safe health facilities; and 34 countries are improving the safety of their health facilities through interventions to reduce the effects of disasters. In Europe, 118 hospitals in seven countries were assessed using the Hospital Safety Index by 2016, and 93 experts from the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe and South-East Asia were trained.

Science and technology

71. Science and technology partners actively contribute to disaster risk reduction and shape national and international policy. Progress has been made to reconfigure the Science and Technology Advisory Group to ensure an interdisciplinary, regionally diverse new membership and to reflect the composition of the Science and Technology Partnership. Members will develop the work plan for several of the deliverables of the Science and Technology Road Map for the implementation of the Sendai Framework. Regional science and technology advisory groups are also being established to advance the contribution of science policy at the national level and to organize sessions on science and technology at regional meetings.

V. Effective global response to address the impacts of the El Niño phenomenon

72. El Niño and La Niña, the two phases of the El Niño Southern Oscillation, have significant effects on weather patterns across the world, triggering predictable disruptions in temperature, rainfall and winds, with impacts on lives and livelihoods. Typically occurring every three to seven years, the last El Niño event occurred in 2015/2016 and forecasts from WMO and several national agencies indicate the possibility of a weak El Niño developing during the second half of 2017. Even if an El Niño episode does not fully develop in 2017, rising sea surface temperatures and other large-scale climatic patterns may be put into motion that could produce negative impacts in vulnerable countries.

73. The El Niño episode of 2015/16 severely affected more than 60 million people around the world. While the episode ended in May 2016, the impact of drought, flooding and severe storms persisted throughout 2016. By August 2016, 23 countries had appealed for international assistance in East and Southern Africa, Central America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific, seeking over $5 billion. Predictable, recurrent, slow-onset weather events such as El Niño do not need to result in disasters. The scale of international humanitarian assistance required to respond to the 2015/16 episode points to shortcomings in resilience-building, risk reduction and mitigation efforts.

74. The Secretary-General's Special Envoys on El Niño and Climate, Mary Robinson of Ireland and Macharia Kamau of Kenya, through the end of their term in December 2016, led advocacy and communication on the impacts of El Niño and supported moving from a humanitarian response to effectively address the challenges of El Niño and climate change in an integrated manner. They visited seven countries affected by El Niño, and through consultations reaffirmed that early preventive action provides exponential returns and significantly reduced costs associated with subsequent response. Important progress in preparing for and responding to El Niño was noted in a number of countries. At the same time, the need for additional efforts to strengthen early warning mechanisms and effectively translate early warning into early action was highlighted.

75. By the end of 2016, the Special Envoys submitted to the Secretary-General the "Blueprint for Action" on preventing El Niño episodes from becoming disasters. The Blueprint is a tool to support countries most vulnerable to El Niño events in maintaining a trajectory to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated and coherent way. Its underlying premise is that El Niño events can be predicted, prepared for and mitigated and humanitarian crises avoided. The early action pillar of the Blueprint includes, among others, commitments to establish collective risk analysis to support decision-making with broad engagement of the scientific community and policymakers, as well as agreement on specific thresholds that should lead to early action. Several countries have expressed an interest in adopting the approach. The Blueprint for Action will be supported by inter-agency El Niño Southern Oscillation standard operating procedures that are being developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness and are scheduled for completion by December 2017. The procedures aim to ensure an earlier response by development and humanitarian actors to the warning signs of future El Niño episodes.

76. In June 2017, WMO convened an El Niño round table for ministers and ambassadors in the margins of the Ocean Conference. The event underscored the importance of reliable information, forecasts and enhanced coordination and highlighted the efforts of national meteorological Services to improve forecast information for El Niño events. El Niño was also a focus at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and featured in discussions on issues such as hazard monitoring, forecasting and warnings, bringing the message to communities at risk, strengthening regional cooperation and partnerships and investing in and sustaining early warning systems. In addition, the African Union Commission and Partners for Resilience organized a side event that focused on mitigation of, response to and recovery from, the impacts of El Niño to share lessons learned from Africa.

77. The important contribution of science and technology to building resilience to the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of El Niño Southern Oscillation was discussed during the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, held in New York in May 2017. The Forum made recommendations on how to better identify requirements and options for the adequate provision of science, technology and innovation to enable countries to

address the impacts of the El Niño episodes. In 2017, for the first time, the forum considered emerging technologies and related impacts that covered a wide range of cross-cutting issues, including El Niño and resilience. In addition, some of the innovators selected through the call for innovations to attend the forum exemplified new models of market inclusion of farmers, as well as text-messaging-based meteorological and extension services that could strengthen resilience towards natural hazards, including the impacts of El Niño.

78. The United Nations system, namely FAO, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the World Food Programme and WMO, contributed extensively to guidance and action planning for El Niño across the world. The approach recognized the multisectoral nature of El Niño impacts, including the impact on food security, livelihoods, health and water and sanitation. Moreover, additional activities undertaken to strengthen the International Research Centre on El Niño, through collaboration with international monitoring centres, including national oceanographic institutions, enhance regional and international recognition of and support for the Centre and provide support in the development of tools for decision makers and government authorities aimed at reducing the impact of the El Niño phenomenon.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

79. It has now been two years since the Sendai Framework was agreed by Member States, during which time much progress has been made in reducing disaster risk. Numerous countries have aligned their national strategies with the Sendai Framework, early warning systems have been strengthened, disaster risk management legislation has been enacted and public education and training has intensified.

80. At the same time, as was highlighted at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2017, enormous challenges remain. The economic costs of disasters continue to escalate; in some places faster than gross domestic product, a consequence of poorly risk-informed economic planning and investment. Climate risk is increasing and threatens to exacerbate existing natural hazards, with manifold impacts on livelihoods, food security, the movement of people and even conflict.

81. International agreements, such as the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda create an unprecedented opportunity to respond to these enormous global challenges, with the 2030 Agenda providing the overarching framework for the incorporation of climate and disaster risk in core economic, social and environmental planning and investments, at the regional, national and subnational levels.

82. One useful contribution to building coherence among these international instruments is ensuring that their reporting and accountability mechanisms are efficient and avoid duplication. The agreement to use the indicators developed to monitor progress in achieving the Sendai Framework global targets to also monitor the implementation of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals is an important step in this direction. Further opportunities to build this coherence will emerge as the methodologies for reporting on progress in the Paris Agreement are refined and as new international instruments are developed on critical issues, such incorporating disaster risk reduction in measures to protect vulnerable migrants and refugees.

83. Integrating disaster risk management, including climate risk, in sustainable development planning at national and subnational levels will require strong national coordination mechanisms that meaningfully engage all relevant institutions and

stakeholders. This coordination and engagement will be essential if Member States are to achieve the Sendai Framework's global target that has the earliest deadline, namely to have national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in place by 2020.

84. National and local disaster risk reduction strategies can promote the integration of disaster risk management, including climate risk, technological, chemical, industrial and biological risk, across all development sectors and levels of administration, creating an enabling environment for public institutions, the private sector and civil society to cooperate in reducing disaster risk and to promote risk-informed development.

85. Managing disaster risk requires the active engagement of numerous stakeholders. The engagement of the private sector is essential. More than 70 per cent of the tens of trillions of dollars in investment in new infrastructure in the decades ahead will be made by the private sector. It will fundamentally be up to the private sector to ensure these investments are risk informed.

86. Similarly, engaging women's groups is key, given the disproportionate impact that disasters have on women, but more importantly because of the hugely disproportionate role women currently play in designing and implementing measures to reduce disaster risk. The Global Platform, and the regional platforms leading up to it, have confirmed the benefits of multi-stakeholder engagement to assess progress, identify ways to address common challenges, foster sustainable development that integrates disaster risk management and develop public-private-civil society partnerships to reduce disaster risk.

87. Normative and regulatory frameworks at all levels and their consistent application and enforcement play an important role in reinforcing accountability for disaster risk management. In this respect, the international instrument on the protection of persons in the event of disasters proposed by the International Law Commission is a significant contribution.

88. The United Nations system is also aligning its own efforts to support Member States in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, through the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience and the General Assembly resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and through the ongoing reforms of the United Nations development system.

89. The United Nations trust fund for disaster reduction is the instrument to support the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and it requires increases in the volume, predictability and timeliness of funding.

90. It is recommended that:

(a) States identify opportunities to coherently incorporate the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement into social and economic planning and investments within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(b) States continue to prioritize and resource the development of inclusive national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020, as a key element of efforts to reduce climate risk and disaster risk more broadly;

(c) States continue efforts to create or enhance systems to record disaster losses and to establish baselines as reference points for measuring improvements, underpinned by data which are to the greatest extent possible disaggregated by income, sex, age and disability;

(d) States consider the Sendai Framework indicators and the recommendations of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction in the development of metrics to monitor the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change;

(e) States take into account disaster risk reduction and the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the preparatory process and deliberations of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, including in the voluntary national reviews;

(f) States enhance international cooperation, global partnerships and the provision of means of implementation to support least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as middle-income countries facing specific challenges in the implementation of the Sendai Framework and, in that context, ensure that bilateral and multilateral development assistance programmes are risk informed;

(g) States consider augmenting their financial contributions to the United Nations trust fund for disaster reduction to support the efforts of Member States to manage and reduce their disaster risk and implement the Sendai Framework.

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Item 73 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the present report, the Secretary-General discusses developments in the field of elections and United Nations electoral assistance since his previous report (A/70/306). During the reporting period, the United Nations assisted, at their request or on the basis of a Security Council mandate, about one third of its Member States.

In the report, the contributions made by the multiple United Nations entities involved in electoral assistance are noted. The continued progress in ensuring coherence and coordination within the United Nations system is described and efforts to strengthen cooperation and strategic partnership between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations and other international electoral assistance providers are highlighted.

While there is no single formula for a successful process, the factors which, in the experience of the United Nations, can help to create an environment conducive to credible elections are discussed in the report. They include, inter alia, mitigating zero-sum politics; pursuing dialogue and consensus in establishing the legal electoral framework; focusing on inclusion and non-discrimination; and encouraging broad participation. As is emphasized in the report, the overriding responsibility for a successful election lies with political leaders, from both government and opposition parties. That encourages political actors to remain engaged in an electoral process once they have joined it and to refrain from alleging widespread fraud without evidence.

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Although there has been a continuous increase in terms of women's representation in parliaments worldwide, more needs to be done. Supporting the efforts of Member States in promoting the participation of women in political and electoral processes therefore remains one of the highest priorities of the Organization. The Secretary-General expresses deep concern at the violence committed against women in elections, and calls upon Member States to increase efforts to understand and prevent this form of violence.

Other aspects of inclusion in elections are touched on in the report, highlighting further specific groups that deserve special attention as voters, candidates and election workers, in particular persons with disabilities and youth. In addition, the challenges faced by Member States in allowing citizens abroad to exercise their political rights are addressed. While the participation of citizens abroad may be a factor in strengthening the credibility of an electoral process, such issues are best decided in context by the Member State concerned.

In some instances there have been tensions around efforts to remove or change term limits, but there is no international norm governing term limits as such. Nevertheless, term limits can be important safeguards against "winner-take-all" politics and the manner in which related amendments are sought can be critical factors affecting public confidence.

While demand for United Nations assistance remains strong, resource limitations have on occasion restricted the ability to meet that demand. In the report, concrete ways to address these serious funding challenges are called for. In that regard it is not always possible or appropriate to transfer electoral responsibilities from a United Nations peace mission to other United Nations entities.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 70/168, by which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of that resolution. In the report, United Nations activities in the field of electoral assistance since the previous report on the subject (A/70/306) are described.

2. In 1991, the General Assembly adopted a framework for the provision of United Nations electoral assistance, which continues to govern this field of work. United Nations electoral assistance is provided only at the specific request of the Member State concerned, or based on a mandate from the Security Council or the General Assembly. Before assistance is agreed and provided, the United Nations assesses the needs and capacities of the Member State to ensure that the support is tailored to the specific situation. The Assembly has reiterated on many occasions that assistance must be carried out in an objective, impartial, neutral and independent manner and with due respect for national sovereignty. It has also reaffirmed that there is no single model of democracy and that the responsibility for organizing elections lies with Member States.

3. During the reporting period, the Organization continued to respond to a significant demand for electoral assistance, in particular in the form of technical assistance and the strengthening of the capacity of national electoral authorities, even though the nature of the requests has also varied significantly. The report reflects on developments during the reporting period with respect to elections and electoral assistance. During the reporting period, the United Nations assisted, at their request or on the basis of a Security Council mandate, about one third of its Member States in conducting elections, through a wide variety of electoral assistance activities (see annex I).

II. United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period

A. Mandates

4. Since its forty-fourth session, the General Assembly has regularly considered the question of enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections, including the issue of United Nations electoral assistance. Most recently, in its resolution 70/168, the Assembly recommended that the United Nations continue to provide technical advice and other assistance to requesting States and electoral institutions, in order to help to strengthen their democratic processes, bearing in mind that the United Nations may provide additional assistance in the form of mediation and good offices upon the request of Member States.

5. The institutional arrangements for United Nations electoral assistance and the number of entities involved in elections have grown and evolved over the years since 1991, the year in which the Secretary-General designated the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs as the focal point for electoral assistance matters, with the endorsement of the General Assembly. In a field of diverse United Nations actors, the General Assembly has repeatedly highlighted the importance of system-wide coherence and consistency, and has reaffirmed the leadership role of the focal point in that respect. Accordingly, the focal point is responsible for setting electoral assistance policies, for deciding on the parameters for United Nations electoral assistance in a particular requesting country and for maintaining the single

electoral roster of experts who can be rapidly deployed when required for any United Nations assistance activity.

6. The focal point is supported by the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs. Following requests from Member States and in consultation with relevant United Nations entities, the Division is responsible for conducting electoral needs assessments. It recommends to the focal point the parameters for all United Nations electoral assistance and advises on the design of electoral mission components or assistance projects. The Division also develops and maintains the United Nations single electoral roster of experts and is entrusted with maintaining the institutional memory of the Organization, in collaboration with other agencies. On behalf of the focal point, the Division provides political and technical guidance to all United Nations entities involved in electoral assistance, including on electoral policies and good practices. When required, the Division provides support to the Secretary-General and his envoys, and to United Nations political and peacekeeping missions in the prevention and mediation of electoral crises. The Electoral Assistance Division also maintains electoral partnerships with other regional and intergovernmental organizations involved in elections.

7. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the major implementing body of the Organization for support to developing electoral institutions, to building partnerships, legal frameworks and processes and for support to elections in non-mission settings. In resolution 70/168, the General Assembly requested UNDP to continue its democratic governance assistance programmes in cooperation with other relevant organizations, in particular those that promote the strengthening of democratic institutions and linkages between civil society and Governments.

8. In peacekeeping or post-conflict environments, electoral assistance is generally provided through components of field missions under the aegis of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or the Department of Political Affairs. Military and police components of peacekeeping missions support national law enforcement agencies in providing security for electoral processes. UNDP usually contributes to the implementation of electoral assistance mandates undertaken by such field missions, including voluntary contributions by Member States. In countries with peacekeeping, peacebuilding or special political missions, electoral assistance is delivered in a fully integrated manner, under the mission lead, irrespective of whether the mission is structurally integrated.

9. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides training and advice on human rights monitoring in the context of elections, supports and organizes campaigns for peaceful elections and engages in general advocacy for electoral laws and institutions that are compliant with human rights. It also monitors and reports on human rights violations during elections, particularly on violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and to peaceful assembly and association, which can be at risk when elections approach. By its resolution 33/22, the Human Rights Council also requested the High Commissioner to produce, for the thirty-ninth session of the Council, a set of draft guidelines for Member States on the effective implementation of the right to political participation in public affairs, which includes the right to vote and to be elected.

10. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, the empowerment of women and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. Within that mandate and through its

normative support functions and operational activities, UN-Women provides guidance and technical support to all Member States, at their request, on gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and gender mainstreaming. It promotes gender equality and women's participation in electoral processes and provides training and advice in those areas. UN-Women is also mandated to lead, coordinate and promote the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

11. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) promotes and supports freedom of expression, press freedom and freedom of information. Free, independent media, online and offline, are essential to democracy and UNESCO therefore aims to support the development of fair, safe and professional media coverage, including by providing training to strengthen the capacity of the media to report in a fair and balanced manner on electoral activities.

12. Other entities of the United Nations system involved in electoral activities include the Department of Field Support, which is primarily responsible for providing administrative and logistical support to United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions and other field presences; the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which supports, in partnership with other United Nations entities, the implementation of electoral activities in post-conflict/peacekeeping environments or in non-mission settings; the United Nations Volunteers programme, which works with multiple partners to integrate qualified and highly motivated personnel into electoral projects and electoral components of peace operations, while promoting the value and global recognition of volunteerism; the Peacebuilding Fund, which can, exceptionally, support elections at critical junctures for peacebuilding; and the United Nations Democracy Fund, which supports projects that strengthen the voice of civil society, promote human rights and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes. In 2016, the International Organization for Migration, which is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration and supports the implementation of out-of-country voting programmes for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, joined the United Nations system.

B. Electoral assistance activities

13. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to provide assistance to Member States in conducting their electoral processes in a professional, accurate, impartial and transparent manner throughout all stages of their administration, and in implementing the democratic principles of universal and equal suffrage, as well as other international obligations of Member States. The Organization assisted Member States to build public confidence in the electoral administration and in the process itself, highlighting elections as part of broader, inclusive political processes. Where appropriate and as requested, the United Nations has also assisted Member States in creating a conducive environment for holding peaceful and credible elections through good offices, support to political dialogue, facilitation and mediation, often in collaboration with regional and subregional entities or other actors. Short descriptions of recent electoral assistance activities in selected Member States are set out in annex II. Lists of all the States that received electoral assistance during the period under review are contained in annex I.

C. Cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system

14. In its resolution 70/168, the General Assembly reiterated the need for ongoing comprehensive coordination under the auspices of the focal point. During the reporting period, progress was made in strengthening this coordination framework. Further system-wide electoral assistance policies were issued by the focal point, following consultations with United Nations entities, including policies on the conduct of United Nations personnel in and around electoral sites and on supporting the prevention of election-related violence. United Nations entities continued to meet in the Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism for Electoral Assistance, chaired by the Electoral Assistance Division, in order to exchange information, coordinate electoral activities and discuss the development of electoral policy.

15. The United Nations single electoral roster now includes 715 persons who have been assessed and pre-cleared as electoral experts at various levels and in different fields of electoral work. The Secretariat and participating entities continue to use the roster to meet their staffing requirements with specific profiles in field operations. In 2017, a campaign was launched to increase the number of candidates for senior-level positions, with particular emphasis on female candidates and those fluent in French.

D. Cooperation with other organizations

16. Progress was made in enhancing existing electoral partnerships with other organizations and in initiating new ones. For example, the Electoral Assistance Division continued to maintain a senior electoral expert position in the United Nations Office to the African Union to support the United Nations and the African Union in electoral matters, including in electoral crisis management. Together with UNDP, the Electoral Assistance Division also collaborated with the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in training electoral staff and in the management of electoral databases and institutional memory. In 2017, the United Nations, in partnership with the League of Arab States, organized a number of electoral practitioner events, also attended by representatives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other organizations. As a further example of collaboration, the United Nations and the secretariat of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) continued their newly established partnership in electoral matters, including through a staff exchange programme and a round-table discussion on women's participation in electoral processes. The United Nations also assisted with the establishment of an electoral database and institutional memory for the CARICOM secretariat.

17. UNDP continued to implement a large number of its support activities through a formal partnership with the European Union, one of its most significant partners, including in country-specific projects. The formal framework for this collaboration was reviewed and renewed in 2016. UNDP further supported the development of the first organization of Arab electoral management bodies, launched in June 2015, to provide a platform for regional collaboration. Between 2015 and 2017, OHCHR collaborated with the Carter Center to organize a series of workshops aimed at greater cooperation between the human rights and international election observation communities.

18. The United Nations maintained its support to platforms for electoral capacity-building, institutional memory and knowledge-sharing at the global level. They include the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network and the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) project. These are prominent

knowledge and training tools for electoral officials and practitioners around the world. The United Nations and other partners in these initiatives have actively contributed to updating them on a regular basis. Furthermore, since January 2017, UNDP, supported by the Electoral Assistance Division and other partners, serves as the ACE coordinator.

19. In October 2015, the Secretariat hosted the observance of the tenth anniversary of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, first commemorated at the United Nations in 2005. The Declaration has been endorsed by 52 organizations from various parts of the world, indicating its global recognition as a norm-shaping document for the professional observation of electoral processes. In a parallel development, the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations, launched at the United Nations in 2012, has been endorsed by 293 organizations and continues to enjoy growing acceptance as a normative document among non-partisan citizen election monitoring organizations.

III. Gender equality and elections

20. The global average percentage of women in the lower or single houses of parliament has almost doubled since 1997, increasing from 12.4 per cent to 23.4 per cent in 2017. That is encouraging, but still far short of the gender balance highlighted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The figures are even lower for positions in other branches of government. For example, as of January 2017, only 7.27 per cent of all heads of State and 4.75 per cent of all heads of government were women. Women represented 18.3 per cent of all ministers, only a small increase from the 14.2 per cent they represented in 2005. Clearly, more needs to be done globally to improve the situation. Supporting the efforts of Member States in promoting women's participation in political and electoral processes therefore remains one of the highest priorities of the Organization.

21. United Nations entities, including UN-Women, UNDP, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, OHCHR and the Department of Political Affairs, continued to provide technical assistance and advice to Member States on gender equality in elections. In Libya, an electoral gender-mapping exercise was undertaken by the United Nations in close coordination with relevant local authorities to identify existing barriers to women's participation and provide recommendations on potential strategies to overcome those barriers. In Nepal, UNDP and the Election Commission designed a programme to encourage the participation of women as candidates in the electoral process, with a particular focus on Dalit women. In Afghanistan, the Electoral Assistance Division advised the Special Electoral Reform Commission on changes to the electoral system, including ways to increase women's participation through the use of quotas and other temporary special measures. There were also continued systematic efforts to ensure that all United Nations electoral assistance policies and activities are gender-sensitive and include key components on promoting women's political participation. For example, every needs assessment conducted during the reporting period, included a gender analysis and related recommendations.

22. UN-Women and UNDP produced a guide for electoral management bodies on promoting gender equality and women's participation. UN-Women supported efforts to monitor a range of issues related to women's participation in political processes, including the establishment of domestic monitoring mechanisms to track and address incidents of violence, and the conduct of country-level assessments to

determine the scope of violence against women and identify prevention and response measures.

IV. United Nations resources for electoral assistance

23. The costs for the core staff of the Electoral Assistance Division are covered by the regular budget of the Organization. Extrabudgetary funds have continued to play a vital role in enabling the Division to carry out its various substantive activities. As noted in a recent report of the Secretary-General on the financing of peacekeeping operations (A/70/749), the Department of Political Affairs is currently working with other partners to monitor the provision of services by the Division to peacekeeping operations to ensure that activities directly related to peacekeeping in the area of electoral assistance are funded commensurately.

24. The trust funds administered by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, along with the UNDP funding window for governance and peacebuilding, both of which are funded through extrabudgetary resources, continued to play a key role in enabling the Organization to implement rapid response and catalytic projects and programmes, including those aimed at preventing conflict and supporting the participation of women and underrepresented groups in political processes. The Electoral Assistance Division used extrabudgetary funds to support the campaigns for the single electoral roster, as well as to rapidly establish activities and deploy experts to a number of countries upon their request. Extrabudgetary funds administered by UN-Women were used to support programming to promote women's political and electoral participation.

25. The funds for UNDP electoral assistance projects are generally provided through voluntary contributions from Member States and often managed through multi-partner basket funds, which include national counterparts in the management structure so as to ensure greater national ownership. In integrated peacekeeping and special political missions with an electoral component, the mission budget covers some of the electoral work (including that of the relevant mission staff), while the balance, which is often quite substantial, is funded through UNDP multi-donor funding mechanisms. Even without a change in the electoral assistance mandate of a mission, its resource requirements for electoral support activities are likely to vary over time. Typically, requirements will increase not only shortly before an election event, but at any time prior to a major phase in an electoral process. The cyclical, and sometimes unpredictable, nature of electoral processes calls for a flexible and longer-term perspective when considering staffing and other requirements. During the reporting period, UNDP faced significant challenges in raising funds for both its global project for electoral cycle support and for country-specific assistance projects. In some cases, including in peacekeeping contexts, United Nations electoral assistance could not be provided as requested, owing to a lack of funding.

V. Observations

26. As emphasized by the Secretary-General in a number of his reports and statements, the prevention of conflict is the priority of the Organization. A similar perspective is appropriate in considering United Nations electoral assistance. Elections, when well conducted, can be a process for conciliation, for giving voice to citizens and for peaceful transitions; but they may also deepen divisions, lead to exclusion or trigger violence. The challenge lies in identifying when and how an electoral process can help overcome conflict.

27. The foundation for United Nations engagement with Member States on elections consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other relevant conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Those human rights foundations of political participation and of the right to vote and to be elected are supplemented at the regional level by numerous instruments of a legal nature and by the political commitments of Member States. They are also supplemented by resolutions of the General Assembly, which on numerous occasions has reaffirmed that there is no single model of democracy and that democracy does not belong to any country or region.

28. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights speaks not only of processes but of outcomes: "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government". Elections are the mechanism by which this will is to be expressed and in which the right of citizens to political participation is exercised. The process is important but not an end in itself. A genuine election is ultimately one in which the outcome reflects the freely expressed choice of the people. Citizens must have confidence that this outcome indeed reflects their will in order for it to be accepted. That confidence is determined by factors that go beyond the technical quality of the electoral process itself, or compliance with international obligations, or the effective performance of the electoral management body: it is also shaped by the broader political and economic context.

29. In the experience of the United Nations, the factors set out below can help to create a context that is conducive to credible elections, even if there is no single formula for all situations. Member States and the international entities supporting them are encouraged to consider these factors, as appropriate to their national circumstances, when implementing the right of their citizens to political participation.

Mitigating zero-sum politics well before an election

30. For elections to enjoy broad trust, they should not lead to a situation in which the winner gains all or most of the benefits. A stronger basis for acceptance is a political system which adheres to the rule of law and human rights and in which even defeated candidates have an incentive to participate and to continue to participate. That may involve longer-term reforms of the political and economic system to reduce extremely high-stakes and exclusionary politics; strengthening the system of checks and balances in government; introducing mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights for all; guaranteeing a genuine role for the opposition, including dialogue processes outside the parliament; looking at ways in which national resources are distributed; and tackling corruption and other systemic grievances.

Pursuing dialogue and consensus in setting the "rules of the game"

31. The legal framework for an election, including the electoral system and the mechanism to resolve electoral disputes, should ideally be developed through an inclusive, transparent and participatory process. The rules adopted should reflect a broad political consensus, in order to strengthen the credibility of the outcome those rules will produce.

Embarking on electoral reform: developing solutions that address the problem at hand and fit the context

32. Successful and sustainable reform processes, including the introduction of technological innovations, start with identifying the electoral problems that are to be

addressed rather than, for example, first discussing solutions that may have worked elsewhere. Once there is broad agreement about the shortcomings or difficulties to be overcome, the dialogue can proceed to consider the feasibility of options, preferably again through a broadly consultative process. Such options should take into account the political, legal, social and cultural circumstances of a country, as well as its financial sustainability.

Focusing on inclusion and non-discrimination and mitigating the politics of exclusion

33. Inclusiveness, and the idea that individuals and groups should be given a voice in decisions affecting them, is essential to arriving at an outcome that reflects the will of the people and enjoys broad legitimacy. Conversely, political grievances that rear their heads around election time often revolve around exclusion and marginalization. Some groups that face structural inequalities and are typically underrepresented or marginalized in the electoral process will need special consideration to enable their effective participation. Those groups can include women, youth, minorities, persons with disabilities, people in rural areas and areas that are difficult to access, migrants and refugees, and other populations that are vulnerable because of poverty or illiteracy, or other reasons.

Placing a premium on responsible political leadership

34. The overriding responsibility for a successful election lies with political leaders from both government and opposition parties. Leaders should publicly commit themselves and their supporters to engage in proper, peaceful behaviour; to challenge results through legal and peaceful means only; to accept final outcomes, as officially declared; and to be gracious in defeat and magnanimous in victory, including by ensuring important political space for the opposition. That responsibility also includes refraining from issuing threats of violence or judicial or other harassment of political opponents and from making sweeping comments about possible irregularities without sufficient evidence, or from declaring instances of anomalies to be proof of a "stolen", fraudulent election.

Encouraging the broad participation of all political actors rather than disengagement

35. Something valuable is lost when political actors decide to withdraw from an electoral process. Among other things, it means fewer options for citizens to participate and to have their voice heard, narrowing them down to protest and abstention. While there may be situations of such extreme manipulation or violence that meaningful engagement is compromised, in principle contestants should be encouraged to remain engaged in an electoral process they have joined and discouraged from refusing, ex ante, to accept legitimate outcomes for political gain.

Strengthening both the performance of the electoral authorities and how they are perceived by the electoral stakeholders

36. Election management bodies should not only be able to do their work effectively and to do it free of political influence; they should be perceived as doing so. The independence of an electoral management body and its impact on the credibility of an election has a strong subjective aspect. The independence of such a body is based not only on the regulations that protect it, but also lies in the eyes of the beholder: the voters and the parties. Electoral management bodies should strive to be open, transparent and maximally consultative and informative with and to key contestants, civil society and the general public.

Taking politically and financially sustainable decisions about technology

37. While new technologies can be a tool at the service of electoral processes, the relationship of technology to the success of an election is not always straightforward. United Nations experience suggests that technology by itself does not necessarily create trust or prevent fraud. New technology may be best introduced as a solution to problems that might hinder the credibility of a process or the acceptance of results, not as an end in itself. The process of considering innovations and of procuring equipment, if so decided, must also be credible. Broad outreach and consultations with all stakeholders and comprehensive and consultative feasibility studies should be carried out before introducing technological solutions, including on their financial sustainability. Furthermore, a gradual introduction through pilot projects is important, in order to thoroughly test innovations.

38. Member States are therefore called upon to undertake more systematic efforts to promote and enable women's political participation, which is critical to stable and democratic societies. Regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations are also encouraged to continue to play a supporting role in this regard. As noted in previous reports, the effective political participation of women does not end with increasing their numbers on an elected or appointed body, it requires the full empowerment of women as active participants and leaders in voting and decision-making across public services.

39. While more women than ever before participate as voters, candidates, polling agents, election officials and observers, the violence perpetrated against women in elections is of deep concern. It deprives women of exercising their right to participation and to live a life free from violence; hampers opportunities for their full and equal representation in decision-making; and thereby weakens democratic processes and institutions. Member States, with United Nations support if needed, can and should do more to understand these forms of violence and develop tools to prevent them.

40. In a world with vibrant and vocal young people, who in some regions constitute more than 60 per cent of the population, it is regrettable that younger generations are not always given an active voice in policy decisions that will shape their future. All Member States are urged to consider ways to increase the participation of youth in decision-making and in electoral processes as candidates, voters, electoral officials, party agents and observers. Political leaders and parties are also urged to promote generational changes and consider internal party regulations that can help advance young leaders.

41. Around 1 billion people, or 15 per cent of the world's population, experience some form of disability, which presents a number of obstacles to their full participation in political processes. Member States are encouraged to recognize the particular needs of their citizens with disabilities and take steps towards removing the obstacles that prevent them from fully and equally participating in the electoral process, in line with the commitments under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for those Member States that have ratified it.

42. Member States face tremendous challenges in dealing with migration flows of displaced and fleeing people, as well as migrants motivated by the desire to improve their economic circumstances. The exercise of their political rights has also become a prominent question. Except in the specific case of persons governed by the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the international normative framework does not guarantee voting rights for those who have left or fled their country. Nevertheless,

making provisions for citizens abroad could be a factor in strengthening the credibility of a process. Whether or not to make arrangements for the exercise of political rights abroad is best decided by the Member State concerned, after thorough national consultations, and taking into consideration factors such as the size of the population in question, the costs involved, agreements with host countries and security and operational challenges.

43. There were a number of instances during the reporting period in which tensions around an election were in part caused by efforts to change or remove existing term limits. Although there is no international norm governing term limits as such, where they have been adopted, mostly in presidential or semi-presidential political systems, term limits can be important mechanisms to safeguard against "winner-take-all" politics. Under certain circumstances, the removal of or a change in term limits can undermine the confidence necessary for the political system to function well. The potential for amendments to a legal framework to undermine confidence is greater when they are introduced without following the prescribed process, if they are undertaken shortly before an election, or if the process is not based on a broad national consensus. All leaders are encouraged to consider these factors and their impact before pursuing a change in term limits.

44. The United Nations system stands ready to support Member States, at their request, in facing these and other challenges in conducting their elections. The strength of the system lies in its political impartiality and in the global expertise accumulated over several decades. It also lies in the fact that United Nations assistance is designed to be multipronged, drawing on the expertise of a range of diverse United Nations entities, while maintaining a cohesive, coordinated framework with a global focal point function and a strong focus on integration and delivering as one. These institutional arrangements have proved to be efficient. Furthermore, electoral assistance is designed to complement other United Nations activities, in particular those in support of peaceful transitions, democratic governance, the rule of law, human rights and gender equality.

45. These factors help to explain why the demand for United Nations assistance continues to be very strong. There is, however, no guarantee that assistance can always be successfully delivered. Among other factors, resource considerations place de facto limitations on the extent to which demand can be met. During the reporting period, the United Nations faced instances in which, after the focal point had duly assessed the needs of a Member State and approved a package of technical assistance, international donor funding was not sufficient to complete or even launch an assistance project. While this may be consistent with patterns of donor support in other areas, this emerging challenge must be addressed. Where the United Nations has been requested or mandated by the Security Council or the General Assembly to provide electoral assistance, sufficient funding should be channelled through the United Nations to honour that request or implement that mandate.

46. Given the long-term nature of electoral processes, it is critical to ensure that United Nations missions mandated to provide electoral assistance be adequately resourced with staff and non-staff resources to enable mandate delivery. Those can be complemented during various phases of the electoral process, or around unanticipated electoral events and related political developments with increased capacity. At the same time, in considering future requests for assistance, the focal point has been requested to consider financial sustainability as a matter of greater priority, and to actively explore, in consultation with the Member State concerned, opportunities for lower-cost, sustainable alternatives in electoral processes without sacrificing quality or credibility.

47. Such funding challenges are a reminder that it is not always possible or appropriate to transfer all electoral responsibilities from a continuing United Nations peace mission to other United Nations entities: the latter may simply not be able to attract sufficient donor support to implement the electoral mandate. Aside from financial reasons, it would not be desirable to completely disconnect a United Nations electoral support role, where it exists, from the political mandate of a mission because of the fundamentally political nature of electoral processes.

48. When responding to difficult or challenging elections, effective United Nations assistance, particularly where it is combined with other international efforts to defuse tensions, requires unity and cohesion in the international community. A successful example of this cohesion was the case of Burkina Faso, where a timely engagement of institutions at the international, regional and subregional level was instrumental in encouraging progress and providing the diplomatic, technical and financial support required to restore stability and prepare for the 2015 legislative and presidential elections. In other situations, in contrast, the international community has struggled to find unity and cohesion, which has made preventive diplomacy more challenging to bring about. For an effective alignment of good offices and electoral assistance, opportunities are welcomed for the focal point to provide technical input to regional organizations, at their request, and to relevant United Nations bodies, when discussing election-related topics, to help provide a common understanding and facilitate decision-making.

Annex I

States that received United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period

Afghanistan*
Albania
Algeria
Argentina
Armenia
Benin
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Burkina Faso
Burundi*
Central African Republic*
Chad
Chile
Comoros
Côte d'Ivoire*
Democratic Republic of the Congo*
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
France/New Caledonia
Ghana
Grenada
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau*
Guyana
Haiti
Honduras
Iraq*
Jordan
Kenya
Kyrgyzstan
Lebanon
Lesotho
Liberia*
Libya*
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali*
Mexico
Mozambique
Myanmar
Nepal
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Papua New Guinea
Peru
Republic of Moldova
Rwanda
Samoa
Sao Tome and Principe
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Solomon Islands
Somalia*
State of Palestine
Suriname
Timor-Leste
Togo
Tunisia
Uganda
United Republic of Tanzania
Vanuatu
Zambia

* Assistance provided under a Security Council mandate.

Annex II

Selected examples of United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period

Armenia

At the request of the Government, the United Nations through UNDP assisted the Central Election Commission with the procurement and installation of new technologies ahead of the National Assembly elections in April 2017. In parallel to United Nations technical assistance, the Resident Coordinator engaged with the national stakeholders, supported by the Department of Political Affairs, to underscore the need for broad political consensus for the introduction of technological innovations. An agreement between the Government, the opposition and civil society paved the way for the reforms and for undertaking a feasibility study on electronic voting prior to its full roll-out. These were the first elections in Armenia to utilize new technology that allowed for the biometric identification of voters on election day.

Burundi

At the request of the Government of Burundi, and following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2137 (2014), the United Nations deployed, from 1 January to 31 December 2015, an electoral observation mission in Burundi, the United Nations Electoral Observer Mission in Burundi (MENUB). The mission was mandated to follow and report on the various stages of the presidential, parliamentary and local elections scheduled in 2015. MENUB observers followed standard regional and international electoral observation practices and assessed the process against the international obligations of Burundi and its national legal framework. The Secretary-General reported on the conduct of the electoral processes through reports to the Security Council (S/2015/510 and S/2015/985). UNDP provided electoral assistance through a support project working primarily with the Independent National Electoral Commission. The OHCHR office in Burundi organized a series of workshops on human rights and elections, and supported the establishment of a national network of observers, who were deployed across the country to monitor and report on allegations of human rights violations.

Central African Republic

Between December 2015 and March 2016, the Central African Republic successfully held a constitutional referendum and combined legislative and presidential elections, despite daunting challenges. Both the referendum and the elections were characterized by a relatively high turnout and generally peaceful campaigning by candidates and their supporters. With the exception of security incidents that occurred during the referendum, the successive election days were free of violence. International observers and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) reported significant technical and logistical improvements from one poll to the next. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2217 (2015), the United Nations provided political, technical, operational, logistical and security support in a challenging security and political environment. MINUSCA and members of the United Nations country team undertook, with national and international partners, a series of activities to promote a political and security environment conducive to the holding

of the elections. Important efforts were undertaken by the Department of Political Affairs to provide technical and political support to the United Nations team on the ground and the national authorities, including the deployment of two missions of the Electoral Assistance Division in 2015. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees helped to enable refugees in neighbouring States to participate in the electoral process. The United Nations assisted the Transitional Authority in mobilizing and coordinating international support and funding for the electoral process, which was budgeted at $36.6 million. From the outset, UNDP set up an electoral basket fund which was instrumental in managing funding gaps with potential impact on the electoral process.

Comoros

In 2016, the United Nations was requested by the Government of Comoros to accompany tightly contested presidential and governorate elections. Following the second round of the elections, on 30 April 2016, the constitutional court ordered a rerun in 13 polling stations where polling had been disrupted. Given the narrow margins of the provisional results, the partial rerun could have had an impact on the final outcome of the elections and potentially led to violence if there had been a loss of confidence in the process. Against that background, the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP deployed two senior electoral experts to provide technical guidance to the national authorities; their engagement was instrumental in defusing tensions. In addition, the Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union visited Comoros and led efforts to facilitate the deployment of a delegation of the African Union to observe the rerun. The joint United Nations and African Union presence, among other confidence-building measures, contributed to the acceptance of the election results.

Côte d'Ivoire

Following years of political turmoil around conflicting views on the conditions for enabling a peaceful and inclusive transfer of power in Côte d'Ivoire, the Security Council adopted resolution 1528 (2004), establishing the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and later provided the head of mission with a certification mandate for the oversight of the long-postponed elections (eventually held in 2010). In 2015, Côte d'Ivoire successfully held a second presidential election. The presidential election was followed by the 2016 constitutional referendum and legislative elections, conducted peacefully within the constitutionally established time frames. The extensive electoral support provided to the Independent Electoral Commission of Côte d'Ivoire since 2005 by UNDP and UNOCI has been gradually scaled down with the Commission fully assuming its role and independently organizing the 2016 elections without external technical support. Any residual needs have been addressed through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General supported by a reduced electoral capacity at senior level, retained within the structures of the mission. The subsequent closure and withdrawal of UNOCI by the end of June 2017 attest to the good progress of the political transition in Côte d'Ivoire. While some technical and political challenges remain, the country continues to address them in a peaceful manner.

France/New Caledonia

At the request of the Government of France and in the context of the 1998 Nouméa Accord, which established a framework leading to a consultation on access to full sovereignty to be held in New Caledonia in 2018, the United Nations deployed two missions of experts to accompany the 2016 and 2017 update of the provincial voter list and the constitution of the special voters' list for the consultation. Both initiatives were led by the Department of Political Affairs and were administratively supported by UNOPS. The United Nations experts worked as non-voting advisory members within the 10 Special Administrative Commissions conducting the voter registration process across the territory. In addition a senior expert, heading the teams, also participated in the work of the Committee of Experts accompanying the process and advising on the interpretation of voters' eligibility criteria. The presence of the United Nations experts during the voter registration process was envisioned as a confidence-building measure to enhance the credibility and transparency of the process. The reports of the experts were shared with the Government of France and the President of the Congress of New Caledonia. Their recommendations were addressed by the administering Power through a set of measures designed to correct the shortcomings that had been identified.

Haiti

In 2016 and 2017, Haiti successfully completed the interrupted presidential, parliamentary and local elections of 2015. The preliminary results of the inconclusive first round of the 2015 presidential elections had been challenged in the streets by a number of candidates, leading to the disruption of the process ahead of the second round. Following multiple unsuccessful attempts to reschedule the second round, a political agreement between the outgoing President and key political stakeholders was reached, leading to the formation of a provisional Government and the holding of elections on 20 November 2016. The Provisional Electoral Commission, supported by a United Nations integrated electoral team led by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), and including UNDP, UN-Women and UNOPS, delivered the process without major technical problems, despite the devastating impact of a major hurricane in parts of the country. Notably, the Government assumed greater responsibility for the conduct of the elections by covering the costs of the process. OHCHR monitored the response of the police and justice authorities to election-related incidents in connection with the voting process. The results of the 2016 and 2017 elections were largely accepted and contributed to the restoration of the constitutional order, concluding one year of provisional governance. That paved the way for a re-evaluation of the United Nations presence in Haiti. It is expected that while MINUSTAH will be followed by the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti in October 2017, the new and reduced mission will retain a political and coordination role in electoral assistance beyond 2017, focusing on consolidating the gains achieved and supporting a possible electoral reform process.

Jordan

Jordan held legislative elections on 20 September 2016. The elections were an important step in the country's political reform process, in which it has sought to strengthen the efficiency of the parliament, build a multiparty system and increase political participation by citizens. As part of the process, elections were held under new legislation that introduced an open list proportional representation electoral

system and a redrawing of electoral boundaries. Following proactive decisions by the Independent Election Commission on voter registration, there was a significant increase in the number of registered voters: compared to the 2.2 million voters registered for the previous elections, over 4.1 million were included for the 2016 elections. National and international observers commented positively on the role of the Commission in effectively managing the elections, especially on its outreach efforts to engage with voters and young voters in particular. Voter turnout was 36 per cent. Notably, the level of participation by young voters in the 17-25 age bracket was above average, at 38 per cent. The elections also saw an increase in the number of women elected to the parliament, from 12 per cent in 2013 to 15.4 per cent in 2016. At the request of the Jordanian authorities, UNDP provided the Independent Election Commission with comprehensive technical advice and assistance, with a specific focus on areas relating to voter registration, electoral operations and public outreach.

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Security Council
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International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly and of the Security Council the fifth annual report of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, submitted by the President of the Mechanism in accordance with article 32 (1) of the statute of the Mechanism (see Security Council resolution 1966 (2010), annex 1).

* A/72/150.

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Letter of transmittal

Letter dated 1 August 2017 from the President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to submit the fifth annual report of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, dated 1 August 2017, to the General Assembly and the Security Council, pursuant to article 32 (1) of the statute of the Mechanism.

(*Signed*) Theodor **Meron**
President

Summary

Fifth annual report of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

The present annual report outlines the activities of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.

The Mechanism was established by the Security Council in resolution 1966 (2010) to carry out a number of essential functions of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia after the closure of the two Tribunals. Those functions include attending to a wide range of judicial matters, locating and arresting remaining fugitives, providing protection to witnesses, supervising the enforcement of sentences and managing the archives of the two Tribunals.

With branches in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, and The Hague, the Netherlands, the Mechanism is operating on two continents and continues to draw upon the best practices of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and other tribunals, while also actively pursuing new ways to improve its operations, procedures and working methods so as to maximize effectiveness and efficiency. The Mechanism is guided in its activities by the Security Council's emphasis on it being a small, temporary and efficient structure, whose functions and size will diminish over time, with a small number of staff commensurate with its reduced functions.

During the reporting period, the President supervised matters relating to the management of the Mechanism, coordinated the work of the Chambers, presided over the Appeals Chamber and issued a substantial number of orders and decisions on issues including the enforcement of sentences, the assignment of counsel and legal aid. In its most significant judicial activity, the Mechanism's Trial Chamber at the Hague branch commenced evidentiary hearings in a retrial during the reporting period. The Appeals Chamber is seized of two appeals from judgment and has issued a number of decisions in those and other cases. The Appeals Chamber has also disposed of an appeal against a decision refusing a request for the revocation of a referred case, and, at the close of the reporting period, remained seized of two requests for review of judgment. In addition, single judges issued a large number of orders and decisions on a range of matters, including assisting national jurisdictions through ruling on requests for variations of protective measures and requests for access to confidential information.

The Office of the Prosecutor focused on three priorities: (a) the expeditious completion of trials and appeals; (b) locating and arresting the eight remaining fugitives indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; and (c) assisting national jurisdictions prosecuting international crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The Office of the Prosecutor also continued to perform its responsibilities in respect of other residual functions, including handling the large volume of non-trial and appeal litigation before the Mechanism.

The Registry provided and coordinated the administrative, legal, policy and diplomatic support services for the Mechanism throughout the reporting period. As part of its substantive functions, the Registry offered protection and support services to witnesses, worked on multiple aspects of the enforcement of sentences handed down by the Tribunals and supported the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the preparation of records and archives for transfer to the Mechanism. As part of its administrative functions, the Registry supported all the organs of the

Mechanism in completing recruitment and continued the gradual process of establishing the Mechanism's own self-standing capacity. In a milestone for the institution, facilitated by the work of the Registry, the Mechanism opened its new premises at the Arusha branch during the reporting period.

I. Introduction

1. The fifth annual report of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals outlines the activities of the Mechanism for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.

2. The Mechanism's mandate includes ensuring the trial of the remaining fugitives. While the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has no outstanding fugitives charged with serious violations of international humanitarian law, eight individuals indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda are still at large. Three of the eight are expected to be tried by the Mechanism and the cases of the remaining five have been referred to Rwanda for trial.

3. The Mechanism has also been mandated to conduct a number of other judicial activities, consistent with the provisions of its statute and the modalities specified in the transitional arrangements. The activities concern the retrials of cases completed by the two Tribunals, appeals of their judgments and sentences, reviews of their proceedings and contempt of court and false testimony cases.

4. In addition, the Mechanism has been tasked with the responsibility for certain functions of the two Tribunals, including: the protection and support of victims and witnesses who have testified in the Tribunals' cases; management of the Tribunals' archives; supervision of the enforcement of sentences handed down by the Tribunals; responding to requests for assistance from national authorities; and monitoring cases referred to national courts by the Tribunals.

5. During the reporting period, the Mechanism conducted a range of judicial and other activities within its remit, further developed its legal and regulatory framework and opened its new premises in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania.

II. Activities of the Mechanism

A. Organization

6. In its resolution 1966 (2010), the Security Council established that the Mechanism would operate for an initial four-year period, starting from 1 July 2012. Unless the Council decides otherwise, the Mechanism shall continue to operate for subsequent periods of two years, following reviews by the Council of the progress of the Mechanism's work, including in completing its functions. The Council completed its first review of the progress of the Mechanism's work in December 2015, as set forth in Council resolution 2256 (2015) and reflected in General Assembly resolution 70/227.

7. The Mechanism consists of three organs, which serve both branches of the Mechanism: (a) the Chambers, from which single judges can be appointed and trial and appeal benches formed as needed, and which is presided over by the President; (b) the Prosecutor; and (c) the Registry, which provides administrative services to the Mechanism, including the Chambers and the Prosecutor.

8. Each organ is headed by a full-time principal, common to both branches. The President of the Mechanism is Judge Theodor Meron. The Prosecutor for the Mechanism is Serge Brammertz, who concurrently serves as the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Olufemi Elias was newly appointed as the Registrar of the Mechanism during the course of the reporting period, with effect from 1 January 2017, upon the conclusion of the appointment of the Mechanism's first Registrar, John Hocking.

9. The Mechanism has a roster of 25 independent judges, elected by the General Assembly to serve a four-year term. In June 2016, and further to Security Council resolution 2269 (2016) and article 10 (3) of the statute of the Mechanism, the Secretary-General reappointed the 25 judges for a new, two-year term, from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2018.

B. Legal and regulatory framework

10. An agreement between the United Nations and the Netherlands concerning the branch of the Mechanism at The Hague, signed on 23 February 2015, entered into force on 1 September 2016. The agreement, inter alia, regulates matters relating to the proper functioning of the Mechanism in the Netherlands, facilitates the Mechanism's smooth and efficient functioning and creates conditions conducive to the Mechanism's stability and independence.

11. As provided by article 13 of the statute, the judges of the Mechanism may decide to adopt amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the Mechanism and any such amendments shall take effect upon adoption by the judges of the Mechanism, unless the Security Council decides otherwise. On 26 September 2016, the judges commenced their first in-person plenary at the Hague branch of the Mechanism and adopted amendments to rules 3, 5, 11, 19, 42, 47, 78, 79 and 155 of the Rules. Over the course of the two-day plenary, the judges also received briefings from all three principals of the Mechanism and discussed issues pertaining to the internal functioning of the Mechanism and ways to increase its efficiency.

12. The Mechanism further developed procedures and policies building upon the best practices of both the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. During the reporting period, the President issued a revised practice direction on the procedures for amending the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the Mechanism. Furthermore, the Registrar adopted a policy governing access to the records held by the Mechanism and an additional legal aid policy applicable to counsel representing eligible accused persons in trial proceedings before the Mechanism, as well as a revised practice direction on filings made before the Mechanism.

C. Mechanism Coordination Council

13. Pursuant to rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence, the Mechanism Coordination Council is composed of the President, the Prosecutor and the Registrar and meets on an ad hoc basis to coordinate the activities of the three organs of the Mechanism. The Council has met to discuss, inter alia, matters concerning planning for the next biennium, the transition of functions from the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to the Mechanism, the long-term relocation of acquitted and released individuals and other matters of common concern.

D. Rules Committee

14. The Mechanism's Rules Committee produced its first report to the judges on proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Evidence in September 2016 and is currently considering a number of proposals for amendments to the Rules.

E. Coordination with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

15. During the reporting period, the Mechanism benefited greatly from the operational and administrative support provided by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The principals and staff of both institutions continued to work together closely and shared institutional knowledge, expertise and lessons learned, with a view to ensuring that the progressive transfer of functions from the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to the Mechanism was as efficient and seamless as possible.

III. Activities of the President and the Chambers

A. Principal activities of the President

16. The President, in his capacity as the head of the Mechanism, has engaged in many issues related to the representation and management of the Mechanism throughout the reporting period. He has represented the Mechanism in a variety of external forums, developed and contributed to the development of various policies and guidance documents, including with respect to translation, interpretation and occupational safety and health, and held regular meetings with the Registrar on operational matters subject to the President's overall authority. As described in further detail below, the President has also addressed the Security Council and the General Assembly in relation to the detention by national authorities of Mechanism Judge Aydin Sefa Akay.

17. Pursuant to the statute, during the reporting period, the President submitted two six-monthly reports to the Security Council on the progress of the Mechanism and twice briefed the Council on the work of the Mechanism, in December 2016 and June 2017. Also as mandated by the statute, the President submitted the Mechanism's annual report to the General Assembly and the Council (A/71/262-S/2016/669) and briefed the Assembly in November 2016.

18. During the reporting period, the President engaged with State officials in Arusha, The Hague and other locations, as well as with victims' groups and members of civil society. In addition, the President and senior staff members in the Chambers have exchanged information and views with representatives from other courts and tribunals with a view to identifying and sharing best practices in the field of fair and expeditious case management.

19. In his judicial capacity, the President continued to coordinate the work of the Chambers with a view to achieving efficiencies and making the best use of the diverse array of judicial expertise and legal cultures reflected in its roster of 25 judges, including by providing a broad distribution of judicial work among the judges, while refraining from giving case assignments to those Mechanism judges who are also judges of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, so as not to impede the completion of their work for that Tribunal; ensuring the full readiness of the Chambers in the event of the apprehension of fugitives; and working with fellow judges and senior staff to enhance the smooth and cost-effective functioning of the Chambers more generally. In furtherance of the Mechanism's effective and transparent management, and in consultation with the other judges, the President revised internal processes regarding judicial remuneration and case management during the reporting period. He also issued numerous assignment orders and ruled on requests for administrative review and on requests for the revocation of an order referring a case to Rwanda. In addition, the

President presided over the Appeals Chamber and is serving as the pre-appeal judge in the cases of *Radovan Karadžić* and *Vojislav Šešelj*. With respect to the supervision of the enforcement of sentences, the President issued numerous orders and decisions relating to applications for the early release of persons convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda or the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and other public and confidential matters. He also addressed reports and complaints concerning the conditions of detention of convicted persons serving sentences under the supervision of the Mechanism.

B. Principal activities of single judges

20. During the reporting period, 14 single judges were seized of and issued orders or decisions in relation to numerous requests arising in matters at both the Arusha and Hague branches. Those requests concerned, inter alia, assistance to national jurisdictions, access to confidential information, the variation of protective measures, the disclosure of exculpatory information, allegations of contempt and false testimony and changes in the classification of filings. Collectively, 120 decisions or orders were issued by single judges during the reporting period and, as at 30 June 2017, a single judge was seized of a matter relating to allegations of false testimony. In addition, a single judge completed an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Zdravko Tolimir while in custody at the United Nations Detention Unit in The Hague, and presented his report to the President of the Mechanism on 7 September 2016. The President informed the Security Council accordingly.

C. Principal activities of the Trial Chambers

21. In the case of *Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović*, the Trial Chamber at the branch in The Hague held trial preparation hearings on 28 September and 14 December 2016 and on 7 April 2017. For the purposes of determining the trial schedule, the Trial Chamber heard expert evidence on Jovica Stanišić's medical condition on 12 December 2016 and 2 February 2017. The pretrial conference in the case was held on 17 May 2017 and the trial began on 13 June 2017 with the opening statement of the Prosecution. The presentation of the evidence of the Prosecution commenced immediately thereafter. During the reporting period, the pretrial judge and the Trial Chamber issued 64 decisions or orders, including on the modalities for trial, the admission of evidence and provisional release. The trial is ongoing.

D. Principal activities of the Appeals Chamber

22. On 4 October 2016, the Appeals Chamber denied an appeal filed by Jean Uwinkindi against the Trial Chamber's decision denying his request for the revocation of the referral of his case to Rwanda. In the context of the appeal, during the reporting period, the Appeals Chamber also disposed of requests for the admission of additional evidence and addressed applications concerning procedural matters.

23. The Appeals Chamber also considered a variety of requests during the reporting period relating to protective measures, access to confidential materials and the assignment of legal assistance for potential review applications. For example, on 14 November 2016, the Appeals Chamber determined an appeal concerning a decision to rescind protective measures for a deceased witness. On 17 May 2017, the Appeals Chamber ruled on an appeal against a decision regarding a request for

access to confidential materials. The Appeals Chamber also decided two requests for the assignment of counsel and legal aid in respect of potential requests for review on 23 September 2016 and 13 April 2017, respectively.

24. The Appeals Chamber is seized of appeal proceedings in the *Karadžić* case, in which the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia issued a trial judgment on 24 March 2016. The Appeals Chamber partly granted requests for extensions of time for the briefing, totalling 217 days of extensions. The briefing process concluded on 6 April 2017 with the filing of the parties' reply briefs. During the reporting period, the Appeals Chamber issued 62 decisions or orders in relation to that case during the pre-appeal proceedings, which are ongoing.

25. The Appeals Chamber is also seized of an appeal by the Prosecution against the acquittal of Vojislav Šešelj by a Trial Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The briefing process concluded on 22 February 2017 with the filing of the Prosecution's reply brief. During the pre-appeal proceedings in the reporting period, the Appeals Chamber issued seven decisions or orders in relation to the case, which is being prepared for a hearing of the appeal.

26. As of the conclusion of the reporting period, the Appeals Chamber also remains seized of review proceedings in the case of *The Prosecutor v. Augustin Ngirabatware*. In September 2016, the review proceedings were halted owing to the arrest and detention in Turkey of a member of the bench, Judge Aydin Sefa Akay, notwithstanding the assertion of diplomatic immunity by the United Nations. On 31 January 2017, the pre-review judge ordered the Government of Turkey to cease all legal proceedings against Judge Akay and take all necessary measures to ensure his release from detention as soon as practicable, but no later than 14 February 2017. On 9 March 2017, the President notified the Security Council of the Turkish Government's non-compliance with that order. The review proceedings resumed upon the provisional release of Judge Akay in June 2017, pending further proceedings in his case at the national level. On 19 June 2017, the Appeals Chamber granted Augustin Ngirabatware's request for a review of his convictions, ordered the parties to file, by 31 July 2017, a list of evidence and witnesses each proposed to introduce at the review hearing and indicated that a scheduling order for the hearing would be issued in due course.

27. The Appeals Chamber is also seized of a request for review brought on 7 June 2017 by Eliézer Niyitegeka against the judgment and sentence of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in his case, as well as of an appeal brought by Mr. Niyitegeka against a decision of a single judge on his access to information and materials relating to certain witnesses.

28. On 29 June 2017, the Appeals Chamber was seized of an appeal by Jean de Dieu Kamuhanda against a decision of a single judge relating to Mr. Kamuhanda's request to interview a witness.

IV. Activities of the Office of the Prosecutor[1]

A. Introduction

29. During the reporting period, the Office of the Prosecutor continued to focus on three priorities: (a) the expeditious completion of trials and appeals; (b) locating and arresting the eight remaining fugitives indicted by the International Criminal

[1] The present section reflects the views of the Prosecutor of the Mechanism.

Tribunal for Rwanda; and (c) assisting national jurisdictions prosecuting international crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

30. In managing its work, the Office is guided by the views and requests of the Security Council as set forth in, among other places, paragraphs 18, 19 and 20 of its resolution 2256 (2015). The Office, in conjunction with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, continued to implement the "one office" policy to further streamline operations and reduce costs by effectively integrating staff and resources across the Offices. The Office of the Prosecutor of the Mechanism also continued the coordinated transition of "other functions" from the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

B. Trials and appeals

31. During the reporting period, the Office of the Prosecutor continued its work on one trial (*Stanišić and Simatović*) and two appeals proceedings (*Karadžić* and *Šešelj*) arising out of cases transferred from the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia pursuant to the Mechanism's statute and transitional arrangements. The present ad hoc judicial activity is temporary in nature. It is expected that the Office will conduct further appeal proceedings, if any, in the *Mladić* case following the anticipated rendering of the trial judgment by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in November 2017.

32. On 15 December 2015, the Appeals Chamber partially granted the appeal of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the *Stanišić and Simatović* case, revoked the Trial Chamber's judgment and ordered the case to be retried on all counts. During the reporting period, the Office of the Prosecutor of the Mechanism completed its pretrial preparations in accordance with the workplan for that case issued by the pretrial judge on 3 June 2016. All required filings were submitted by the established deadlines. Trial proceedings began on 13 June 2017.

33. On 24 March 2016, the Trial Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia unanimously convicted Radovan Karadžić of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, and sentenced him to a term of imprisonment of 40 years. During the reporting period, the Office of the Prosecutor completed the written appeals briefing phase in the case 12 months from the issuance of the trial judgment.

34. On 31 March 2016, the Trial Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, by majority, acquitted Vojislav Šešelj on all counts of the indictment against him. During the reporting period, the Office of the Prosecutor completed the written appeals briefing phase in the case 11 months from the issuance of the trial judgment.

35. On 19 June 2017, the Appeals Chamber of the Mechanism granted Augustin Ngirabatware's motion to initiate review proceedings of the convicting judgment against him issued by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The Appeals Chamber ordered a review hearing to be held at which Mr. Ngirabatware and the Office of the Prosecutor will present evidence as to whether there is a new fact which, if proved, could have been a decisive factor in reaching the original conviction.

36. The Office continues to rely on the full cooperation of States to successfully complete its mandate, as set out in article 28 of the Mechanism's statute. The Office's access to documents, archives and witnesses is critical to ongoing Mechanism trial and appeal proceedings. During the reporting period, cooperation

by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Rwanda with the Office of the Prosecutor remained satisfactory. The Office fully expects that its requests for assistance will be promptly and adequately processed.

C. Fugitives

37. During the reporting period, the Office of the Prosecutor continued its efforts to locate and arrest the three fugitives whose cases will be tried by the Mechanism: Augustin Bizimana, Félicien Kabuga and Protais Mpiranya. The Office also continued to search for information on the whereabouts of the five fugitives who are currently expected to be brought to trial in Rwanda following their arrest: Fulgence Kayishema, Phénéas Munyarugarama, Aloys Ndimbati, Ryandikayo and Charles Sikubwabo.

38. The Office completed an overall review of its tracking efforts to date. As a result of the review, a number of challenges were identified and steps are being taken to resolve those issues. In addition, the Office has developed concrete strategies for the apprehension of each of the eight remaining fugitives, which are being implemented. The Office also strengthened its public communications and outreach programmes.

39. The Office, following consultations with key partners, developed and established two task forces focused on Africa and Europe, respectively. The task forces bring the Office together with key partners, including the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and relevant national law enforcement authorities, in an operational structure that can coordinate and conduct intelligence and investigative activities in pursuit of the fugitives. The task force approach will allow the Office to streamline and expedite such activities by promoting information-sharing and strengthening collaboration between the Office and its partners. Support from key partners, in particular INTERPOL and the Government of Rwanda, was critical to the establishment of the task forces, and the Office expresses its gratitude to all national authorities who have so far agreed to participate or provide assistance.

40. At the same time, the Office began undertaking a necessary restructuring of its tracking team. The Office identified a mismatch between the structure and capacities of its tracking team and the activities needed at the present time to move the search for the remaining fugitives forward. In particular, the Office must strengthen its analytical capacities and its ability to work closely with partner law enforcement agencies. In addition, the Office needs to ensure that it can conduct a wide range of necessary investigative activities, including investigations of communications and finances. Accordingly, the Office will in the near future abolish the existing tracking team structure and establish a new fugitives and investigations unit that provides the needed capacities.

41. The Office underscores its commitment to arresting the remaining fugitives as soon as possible. As a reflection of that commitment, the Office will propose that, in the forthcoming budget of the Mechanism for the period 2018-2019, fugitive tracking be reclassified from a continuous to an ad hoc function, as that would clarify and signal the fact that fugitive tracking is a temporary activity that must be brought to a close in a reasonable time period, consistent with other ad hoc functions of the Mechanism.

D. Assistance to national jurisdictions

42. National prosecutions are now essential to achieving greater justice for the victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Consistent with the completion strategies of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the statute of the Mechanism and Security Council resolutions 1966 (2010) and 2256 (2015), the Office of the Prosecutor is mandated to assist and support effective national prosecutions of those crimes. In the affected countries, the effective prosecution of the crimes committed is fundamental in order to build and sustain the rule of law, establish the truth of what occurred and promote reconciliation. Third-party States are also undertaking prosecutions against suspects who are present in their respective territories for crimes committed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. The Office has continued its efforts, within existing resources, to monitor, support and advise national judicial authorities prosecuting war crimes cases arising out of the conflicts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. The Office maintains an ongoing dialogue with its counterparts and undertakes a range of initiatives to assist and build capacity in national criminal justice sectors.

43. During the reporting period, the Office continued to provide national judicial authorities with access to evidence and information in response to a high volume of requests. The Office possesses extensive evidence and invaluable expertise that can greatly benefit national justice efforts. The collection of evidence related to Yugoslavia comprises more than nine million pages of documentation and thousands of hours of audio and video records, most of which were not introduced into evidence in any International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia proceeding and therefore are only available from the Office of the Prosecutor. The collection of evidence related to Rwanda comprises more than one million pages of documentation. The Office's staff have unique insight into the crimes and the cases, and can assist national prosecutors in preparing and proving their indictments.

44. During the reporting period, in relation to Rwanda, the Office received 11 requests for assistance from four Member States and one international organization. All requests have been processed. In total, the Office handed over 23,000 pages of documentation. In relation to the former Yugoslavia, the Office received 239 requests for assistance from eight Member States and three international organizations. Some 146 requests for assistance were submitted by authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 53 by Croatia, 8 by Montenegro and 3 by Serbia. In total, the Office handed over 4,600 documents comprising more than 84,000 pages and 92 audio and video files. In addition, the Office filed submissions in relation to 38 requests for the variation of witness protective measures: 37 concerning proceedings in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 1 concerning a proceeding in Serbia.

E. Capacity-building

45. During the reporting period, the Office of the Prosecutor continued its efforts, within existing resources, to build capacity in national judiciaries prosecuting war crimes. The Office's capacity-building efforts are global in nature, but also focus specifically on the Great Lakes region and East Africa and the former Yugoslavia. Strengthening national capacities supports the principle of complementarity and the national ownership of post-conflict accountability.

46. The Office focused its capacity-building efforts in particular on strengthening peer-to-peer engagement with criminal justice professionals from around the world on the topic of prosecuting conflict-related sexual violence. Those activities build

upon the book, entitled *Prosecuting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence at the ICTY*, produced by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which is an important component of that Tribunal's legacy. The programmes were organized under the auspices of the Prosecuting Conflict-related Sexual Violence Network, set up through the International Association of Prosecutors and supported by the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Office of the Prosecutor of the Mechanism.

47. In Nairobi in August 2016, staff from the Office led a six-day advanced training session that focused on practical legal skills in international criminal law. The training session had a thematic focus on the prosecution of sexual violence crimes in conflict and was attended by 30 prosecutors and other practitioners from Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The training session was followed by a conference to share experience, which brought together a wide range of stakeholders to encourage deeper and more coordinated dialogue, the exchange of expertise and action among actors working to address conflict-related sexual violence at both the international and national levels.

48. In Nuremberg, Germany, in December 2016, Office staff conducted a peer-to-peer discussion on conflict-related sexual violence with practitioners from the Netherlands, Rwanda and Uganda, current and former prosecutors from the International Criminal Court and International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Tribunal and an academic expert. To ensure the sustainability of the discussions, follow-up engagement is being pursued through the Prosecuting Conflict-related Sexual Violence Network, including through the provision of key legal precedents to facilitate national prosecutions.

49. In February 2017, Office staff were part of an expert mission of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to Bogotá to advise on the integration of gender perspectives into the planned transitional justice process in Colombia. The discussions underscored the importance of utilizing existing networks as vehicles for accessing global experience and lessons learned in prosecuting conflict-related sexual violence.

50. In addition to work fostering capacity-building through peer-to-peer activities, the Office of the Prosecutor of the Mechanism and the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia jointly published the book *Prosecuting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence at the ICTY* in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, and launched the new translation during the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia legacy conference in Sarajevo in June 2017. The Office of the Prosecutor of the Mechanism is also continuing its efforts to develop a complementary training programme to help practitioners in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere learn key insights and messages from the book.

V. Activities of the Registry

51. During the reporting period, the Registry continued to provide administrative, legal, policy and diplomatic support to Mechanism operations.

A. Administration, staffing and facilities

52. By its resolution 70/243, the General Assembly decided to appropriate to the Special Account for the Mechanism a total amount of $137,404,200 gross ($126,945,300 net) for the biennium 2016-2017.

53. Over the past year, the Mechanism has continued with the development of its own self-standing administration. That process is in step with the closure of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda at the end of 2015 and the downsizing of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Significant support is still provided by administrative staff of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia as part of the "double-hatting" arrangement.

54. The mandate of the liquidation team of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda concluded on 31 July 2016. After assuming full responsibility on 1 August 2016 for all pending administrative and financial matters pertaining to that Tribunal, the Mechanism has continued to work towards their finalization.

55. Following its high-profile inauguration on 25 November 2016 by the Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania, for the host State, and the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, for the Organization, staff moved into the new premises of the Arusha branch on 5 December 2016. The new premises were completed within budget. The project maximized the usage of local materials and building methods and benefited from best practices and lessons learned in other United Nations capital projects. In December 2016, the project entered the post-construction phase, which includes the completion of required remedial works, the appropriate recovery of direct and indirect costs arising from delays where economically feasible, the completion of the transition from project to facilities management and the final closure of the project account. In that context, attention is being paid in particular to correcting certain technical defects of the facility constructed to host the archives of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The Mechanism continues to be deeply grateful to the United Republic of Tanzania for its steadfast support for the completion of the project and to the Secretariat for its ongoing advice.

56. The Hague branch of the Mechanism is co-located with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The Mechanism has a strong preference, in order to safeguard its legacy and for reasons of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, for remaining at its current premises after the closure of the Tribunal. Technical discussions and negotiations with the authorities of the host State and the owners of the premises are ongoing and progressing in that regard.

57. The Mechanism has a vacancy rate of only 3 per cent for its continuing posts. As at 30 June 2017, the Mechanism had a total of 478 staff (on posts and in general temporary assistance positions): 163 at the Arusha branch, including the Kigali office, and 315 at the Hague branch, including the Belgrade and Sarajevo offices. The Mechanism's staff comprises nationals of 72 States. Of the staff at the Professional level and above, 56 per cent are women and 44 per cent men. Approximately 85 per cent of those recruited were current or former staff members of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

B. Support for judicial activities

58. During the reporting period, the Registry continued to provide support to the Mechanism's judicial activities at both branches.

59. The Registry processed and disseminated more than 1,900 judicial filings, amounting to more than 30,000 pages. In addition, it facilitated and serviced hearings in the *Stanišić and Simatović* retrial, and supported the *Karadžić* and *Šešelj* appeal proceedings. The Registry's Language Support Services provided translations of judgments and other documents into Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, English, French,

Kinyarwanda and other languages, as required, as well as conference and consecutive interpretation.

60. During the reporting period, the Registry adopted a policy governing the remuneration of defence counsel in trial proceedings. One additional remuneration policy is being developed. Once that is adopted, the Mechanism's regulatory framework for legal aid will be complete. In addition, the Registry provided assistance, financial and otherwise, to an average of 39 defence teams comprising a total of approximately 100 defence team members.

61. The Registry continued to support all sections of the Mechanism in the ongoing expansion of rosters of qualified potential staff in order to ensure that the Mechanism is able to scale up rapidly in the event of a sudden increase in judicial activity, for instance, following the arrest of one or more fugitives.

62. The Registry also expanded the list of qualified counsel who can be assigned to suspects or accused persons under rule 43 (B) of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the Mechanism, as well as the roster of duty counsel under rule 43 (C) who are available to be assigned to an accused person for the purposes of an initial appearance. In addition, the Registry facilitated the engagement of pro bono counsel for convicted persons.

C. Support for other mandated activities

1. Witness support and protection

63. The Mechanism is responsible for the important residual function of witness support and protection in relation to thousands of witnesses who have testified in cases completed by the two Tribunals.

64. Consistent with judicial protection orders and in close collaboration with national authorities or other United Nations entities, the Witness Support and Protection Unit provides security to witnesses by undertaking threat assessments and coordinating responses to security-related requirements. During the reporting period, the Unit also ensured that protected witness information remained confidential and continued to contact witnesses when orders to seek consent to the rescission, variation or augmentation of witness protective measures were received. The Unit has implemented and complied with 56 judicial orders related to protected witnesses and prepared for the retrial of the *Stanišić and Simatović* case, including by facilitating the appearance of witnesses in June 2017.

65. As part of the provision of support services to witnesses at the Arusha branch, witnesses continue to receive medical and psychosocial assistance. That assistance is particularly focused on witnesses who were victims of sexual or gender-based violence during the Rwandan genocide.

66. Finally, the witness protection teams at the two branches continue to exchange best practices and use a common information technology platform for their respective witness databases to maximize operational efficiency.

2. Archives and records management

67. During the reporting period, the Mechanism's Archives and Records Section continued preparing the records and archives of the Tribunals for transfer to the Mechanism. The Section provided training, advice and assistance to staff and facilitated the transfer of active and inactive records.

68. The transfer of records of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, including records related to the Tribunal's liquidation activities in 2016, has

involved, inter alia, the comprehensive verification and accessioning of the records at issue, including the integration of relevant metadata into Mechanism databases, and was completed during the reporting period. In The Hague, more than 56 per cent of the inactive physical records of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and 88 per cent (1.6 petabytes) of its digital records have been transferred to the Mechanism. It is estimated that the archives of the two Tribunals will ultimately amount to approximately 12,000 linear metres of physical records and approximately 3 petabytes of digital records.

69. During the reporting period, the implementation of a digital preservation system was completed. Preparations are under way to begin the transfer of digital records into the system in the second half of 2017. The Section also continued to develop the Mechanism's records and archives governance structure and supported the implementation of the Mechanism's electronic document records management system in the Office of the Prosecutor in both branches.

70. The public interface for accessing and searching the judicial records of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Mechanism has continued to be updated, with more than 33,000 public judicial records currently accessible through the Mechanism's website (www.unmict.org). In addition, the Section preserved approximately 2,000 audiovisual recordings of proceedings at the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

71. The Section launched a new standing exhibition highlighting selected "firsts" in the histories of the Tribunals. The Mechanism also hosted international archival meetings at the new facility in Arusha in May 2017, including the annual executive board meeting for the International Council on Archives.

72. Finally, the Mechanism's library at the Arusha branch opened at the new premises in November 2016. The library, one of the premier resources for international law research in East Africa, offers an enhanced research environment for both internal and external clients.

3. Enforcement of sentences

73. As of the end of the reporting period, the Mechanism is overseeing the enforcement of the sentences of a total of 39 individuals: 23 persons convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, who are serving their sentences in two States; and 16 persons convicted by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, who are serving their sentences in nine States. Currently, 10 convicted persons at the United Nations Detention Facility in Arusha and 2 convicted persons at the United Nations Detention Unit in The Hague are awaiting transfer to enforcement States to serve their sentences.

74. Following the transfer to the Government of Senegal in December 2015 of eight prison cells in Sébikotane Prison, which had been refurbished by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Mechanism undertook and completed in 2016 the procurement of furniture and other necessary assets to equip the cells for prospective use in the enforcement of sentences under the supervision of the Mechanism. The cells are ready for use and the Mechanism continues to look forward to the final implementation of the decision by Senegal to accept prisoners of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which will enable the enforcement of sentences in that State.

75. The Mechanism continued to seek the cooperation of existing enforcement States in enforcing the sentences of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Mechanism. In addition, the Mechanism continued to work towards securing additional agreements

to increase the enforcement capacity of both branches. On 12 May 2017, the Mechanism concluded a revised agreement with the Government of Benin on the enforcement of the sentences of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda or the Mechanism. That agreement, like the amended agreement on the enforcement of sentences concluded with the Government of Mali in June 2016, reflects best practices in the enforcement of international sentences. Similar agreements are under negotiation with other enforcement States. The Mechanism is grateful to Member States that are enforcing sentences and to those that are considering enforcing sentences in the future.

76. The Mechanism continued to closely monitor the particular security situation in Mali and received advice and reports from the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat and the designated security official in Mali, where 13 convicted persons are serving their sentences under the supervision of the Mechanism.

4. Assistance to national jurisdictions

77. The Registry facilitated an increasing number of requests by national authorities, or parties to national proceedings, for assistance in connection with national proceedings related to the genocide in Rwanda or the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. During the reporting period, the Registry processed 324 requests for assistance, including requests to question detained persons and protected witnesses; to rescind, vary or augment protective measures for witnesses; and to retrieve and transmit confidential and certified material to national authorities.

5. Upkeep and relocation of acquitted and released persons

78. The Mechanism has continued to deploy focused efforts, including bilateral engagement with potential receiving States, to facilitate sustainable solutions for the resettlement of released and acquitted persons and to provide those still residing in Arusha with relevant assistance. While continuing to explore new ways to address the pressing situation pertaining to those individuals, the Mechanism implemented, with effect from 1 July 2016, a revised and more efficient approach in relation to the upkeep of the acquitted and released persons in Arusha pending their relocation. In December 2016, a State in Africa agreed to accept one released person and one acquitted person for relocation, reducing the number of acquitted and released individuals remaining in Arusha to 11. The recently revised agreement with Benin, like the Mechanism's agreement with Mali, contains a specific provision on the facilitation of the temporary stay of persons released following the completion of their sentences, and the Mechanism is engaged in negotiations towards the same end with other States. The Mechanism is grateful to the States concerned and remains appreciative of the ongoing support of the international community in that regard.

6. Monitoring of referred cases

79. Pursuant to article 6 (5) of its statute, during the reporting period the Mechanism monitored three cases referred to Rwanda through monitors from the Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists. In one of those three cases, a Rwandan trial court entered convictions for genocide and crimes against humanity during the reporting period. The Mechanism continues to work on establishing a similar monitoring arrangement for the two cases referred to France, which were monitored by interim monitors from the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia or the Mechanism during the reporting period. Public monitoring reports are posted on the Mechanism's website.

7. External relations and information-sharing

80. During the reporting period, the External Relations Office continued to raise the profile of the Mechanism and awareness of its mandate by engaging with the diplomatic community, the media, civil society and the public, including in Arusha, Dar es Salaam and The Hague, and by organizing a number of high-profile events and media campaigns.

81. In September 2016, the Office organized a panel discussion in The Hague on the new models of international justice, as well as a diplomatic briefing by the Mechanism's principals in May 2017. In April 2017, the Mechanism, the East African Community and members of the local Rwandan diaspora co-hosted a commemorative event in Arusha, marking the twenty-third anniversary of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The Mechanism also hosted an inaugural two-day, high-level judicial colloquium for national, regional and international judges at the Mechanism's new premises in Arusha in May 2017.

82. During the reporting period, the Office responded to more than 450 queries from the media and researchers, facilitated interviews with the Mechanism's principals on major television and radio networks and expanded the visibility of the Mechanism through the facilitation of broad coverage in international and regional print media. Moreover, the Office produced a range of new public information material.

83. The Office also continued to manage the Mechanism's website, as well as the legacy website of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (http://unictr.unmict.org) and the website of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (www.icty.org). During the reporting period, the Mechanism's website received more than 350,000 page views. In January 2017, the Mechanism launched an improved version of its website that offers greater accessibility and usability and increased the content available in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian and Kinyarwanda. The Mechanism also launched a new version of its database on case law in March 2017 and expanded the content and reach of its social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr and YouTube.

VI. Conclusion

84. The Mechanism's progress in completing its judicial and other work swiftly, while maintaining the highest of standards, underscores its commitment to the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council and to serving as an efficient and effective model for international criminal justice institutions. Even as the Mechanism moves into a phase of intense judicial activity, prepares to assume responsibility for the relevant remaining aspects of the work of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia upon the closure of that Tribunal at the end of 2017 and takes the final steps necessary to be fully self-standing, it will continue to focus on carrying out its mandate in accordance with best practices and due process and in a timely, lean and efficient manner.

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Item 127 of the provisional agenda*
Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Letter dated 8 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement by the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation concerning Russian participation in the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly under item 127 of the preliminary list.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

* A/72/150.

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Annex to the letter dated 8 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation concerning Russian participation in the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

In July 1906, at a session of the State Duma of the Russian Empire held in the Tauride Palace, the historic decision was taken to send the first Russian delegation to participate in the fourteenth Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in London. In October 2017, the Tauride Palace — the cradle of Russian parliamentarianism — will host participants and guests for the 137th IPU Assembly.

Established as a group of parliamentarians in 1889, IPU has become the most representative international parliamentary organization. It now has 173 member parliaments and 11 international parliamentary organizations as associate members.

The Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation notes that, over a long period of history, parliamentary groups from the State Duma of the Russian Empire, the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation have worked consistently in IPU to advocate State interests, in full conformity with the purposes and principles set out in the IPU Statutes.

As one of the houses of the Federal Assembly — the parliament of the Russian Federation — the Federation Council attaches great importance to the work of IPU as the leading international forum for the development of parliamentary diplomacy. In that regard, the Federation Council endorses the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments adopted at the 195th session of the IPU Governing Council on 16 October 2014.

The Federation Council would like to see a greater role for IPU in joint efforts to establish a just and democratic world order and to foster inclusive political dialogue in the world's hotspots, particularly Syria. The efforts of IPU to expand interparliamentary cooperation on combating terrorism, including the decision to establish within its membership a high-level advisory group on counter-terrorism, are worthy of support.

The Federation Council acknowledges the central role of parliaments in supporting democracy and affirms its readiness to join in celebrating the International Day of Democracy, designated for 15 September pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 62/7 of 8 November 2007.

The Federation Council supports the initiative of the Interparliamentary Assembly of the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States to designate 30 June as the International Day of Parliamentarianism in honour of the anniversary of the founding assembly of IPU in Paris in 1889.

The decision to hold the IPU Assembly in St. Petersburg from 14 to 18 October 2017 demonstrates the unquestionable success of the interparliamentary movement and of the majority of States in their efforts to build international relations based on the principles of equality, democracy, respect and consideration of mutual interests.

The Federation Council will make every effort to ensure that the 137th IPU Assembly is held at a high level, in an atmosphere in which all participants without

exception can exchange their views openly and which facilitates the affirmation of democratic values and intercultural, interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue.

We will be pleased to welcome delegations from all IPU member parliaments and associate members, representatives of observers, and guests at the IPU Assembly in St. Petersburg.

Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation